



Together Again

Topic

Hanukkah

Grade Level(s)

5th – 12th

Big Ideas

Celebrations are enhanced by being with other people.

Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Reflect on why Hanukkah is meant to be a communal holiday
2. Compare how celebrations are different when they are done with a community and when they are done alone or with small groups.
3. Plan a communal celebration

Relevant Vocabulary

בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ (<i>Beit Hamikdash</i>)	The Temple in Jerusalem
חֲנוּכְיָה (<i>Hanukkiyah</i>)	The 9-branched (one for the <i>shamash</i>) candelabra used to light candles on Hanukkah
כֹּהֵן (<i>Kohein</i>)	A Jewish priest

Materials / Technology Needed

- [Pic Collage](#) (available for iOS and Android) or other collage app
- iMovie (available for iOS) or other video editing app.

Background for Teachers

Hanukkah is meant to be a communal holiday that publicizes the miracle that occurred when the Hasmoneans defeated the Seleucid Greeks (Rashi on Tractate Shabbat 21b sv: "מבחוץ," et al.). Traditionally, the *hanukkiyah* is placed outside or in a window so that passers-by can see the lit candles; and people are meant to light their candles at a time when the maximum number of people will be out walking by (Tractate Shabbat 21b, et al.).

The original celebration of Hanukkah was itself a communal celebration. The Seleucid Greeks had become the ruling power over Jerusalem and the surrounding region. Under their rule, laws were enacted that outlawed many Jewish practices and encouraged the Hellenization of the Jewish people. Also, the *Beit Hamikdash* was desecrated. As a result, a group led by the *Kohein*, Mattityahu (Mattathias), rebelled against the Seleucid Greeks in an effort to regain religious freedom and reclaim the *Beit Hamikdash*.

According to popular lore, Hanukkah is a commemoration of the Hasmonean rebels reclaiming the *Beit Hamikdash*; cleansing it; and then, through a miracle, lighting the menorah for eight days from oil that should have lasted only one day (Tractate Shabbat 21b).



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However, other accounts tell slightly different origin stories for Hanukkah. The victory over the Seleucid Greeks remains the same, but the cause and method for celebration differs. One account tells of how those that recovered the *Beit Hamikdash* celebrated in the manner of Sukkot because they were forced to celebrate Sukkot while confined in caves just 2 months prior (2 Maccabees 10:1 – 8). Other sources mention simply that there was a great communal celebration at the rededication of the *Beit Hamikdash* and that it lasted eight days (1 Maccabees 4:36 – 59, Josephus Antiquities 12).

Description of Activities

1. Students gather pictures of themselves celebrating with friends, extended family, etc. These pictures could be of birthday parties, holiday gatherings, or any other type of celebration.
2. Students use Pic Collage (or other collage app) to create a collage of their pictures.
3. Students share their collages and explain how people's expressions indicate their mood in the pictures. Students discuss: Do people seem happy? Why might they seem happy? What about being together makes celebrating more festive?
4. Ask students how celebrating by oneself or with only immediate family members might change the level of celebration.
5. Explain that Hanukkah celebrations are meant to commemorate the Jewish people returning to (and purifying) the *Beit Hamikdash*. (See Background for Teacher for more details.) Discuss how the celebration might have been enhanced by everyone celebrating together. Why might people have been so happy to celebrate out in the open?
 - a. For more advanced students, consider comparing how celebrating Sukkot might have been different in caves as opposed to in the *Beit Hamikdash*
6. Ask how this coming out into the open to celebrate might be similar to
7. Create a video that shows how the Maccabees might have celebrated their festive occasions if they had needed to use Zoom.
8. As a group, plan a celebration for when everyone can be together.
9. Encourage students to find ways to make their own Hanukkah celebrations more communal. Some suggestions include:
 - a. Students place their *hanukkiyot* in their windows to share the light with others.
 - b. Students go for walks with their families to look for Hanukkah lights in neighbors' windows.