



## Chanukah Fun

I really like Chanukah; it's that kind of laid-back *chag* that only comes around, *oh, I'd say once a year*. It's not frantic like Purim and doesn't require planning seven hundred meals like *Sukkot*. No one needs new clothes and the only cleaning you have to do is some dusting off of the menorahs.

It's eight beautiful nights with the whole family coming home early, lighting the menorah and having dinner together. And then, because darkness falls at around 4:00 p.m. and you've eaten dinner early because everyone was home anyway, there are about four years until bedtime.

And how to fill those four years, *um, I mean hours*? You can only stretch bath time for so long, so pick and choose from these activities and who knows, you might have so much fun, you'll just push bath time off until tomorrow night. Don't worry, I won't tell.

### Build Your Own Menorah

You know how you buy Lego and then some more Lego and then all of a sudden you are the proud owner of a huge container of Lego? This is what you do – pull it out, all of it, and drag the box to the living room floor. Challenge the kids to build



Lego menorahs. Don't impose restrictions like making the tallest menorah or using the most pieces, just leave it open-ended. That way no one gets frustrated, they get to use their creativity and at the end, everyone gets a few pieces of chocolate *gelt* anyway. It's a win-win for everyone, con-

sidering that you get to sit on the couch the whole time, watching your little construction workers do their thing.

### Chocolate Gelt Hunt

Start by ripping open a bunch of those netted bags of coins and hide them around the house, kind of like *bedikat chametz*, but not, because if these wind up near a radiator, you'll be left with melted chocolate and a crying child. For everyone's sake, draw yourself a map of the hidden chocolates.

You can confine the game to one room if the kids are small or let the kids have the run of the house – either way, please don't let them run in the room with the lit menorahs. Everywhere else can be fair game.

### Menorah Magnets

Little kids love magnets and mommies like ideas that can be saved year after year, so this one will work for everyone.



You can make this in advance or with the kids, but the time it takes to make the menorah compared to how nice it looks is so minimal that you'll start thinking about what else you can make with magnetic sheets and cardstock.

That's right. That's all you'll need. Pick up some magnetic sheets – they usually come in 8"x10" at your local crafts or office supply store and while you're there, you can pick up some cardstock (which is really just hard paper) in a multi-colored pack.

To start, draw a menorah base onto a piece of cardstock. If you're nervous, use a pencil; otherwise a Sharpie marker works great too.

Cut out your menorah base and glue it onto a magnetic sheet – but not on the magnetic side. Allow it to dry and then cut it out.

For the next part – the candles – use several different colored sheets of cardstock. Draw the candle and the flame, each candle or two a different color.

Cut out the nine different candles and glue them onto the magnetic sheet. Then cut them out. And you're done.

You can stick these on the fridge and wait to see who notices them first or you can tell the kids about them. Either way, it's the kind of toy that you make once and pack away until next Chanukah.

### Baking Cookies

Another fun Chanukah activity is baking cookies. There's nothing wrong with picking up a pack of Chanukah themed cookie cutters from your local Judaica store, but last year we took it a step further and used a little man shaped cookie cutter to make Yehuda HaMaccabee cookies. The kids decorated the cookies by drawing a face and a *kip-pah* on his head. We made a second batch of cookies using a small dreidel-shaped cookie cutter – but before we baked them, we cut off the tops of the dreidels so that the cookies resembled a shield. Once baked, we used frosting to glue a shield onto each Yehuda HaMaccabee cookie. These cookies were a huge hit at our family Chanukah party.

### Dancing Dreidels Buddies

I really like projects that can be used year after year. When my kids were very young, I cut out a bunch of dreidels from blue and white foam, attached string and dangled them from the kitchen doorway – and I used those for a number of years.

Now that the kids are slightly older, they like to be more involved. So this year

we made hanging cardboard dreidels – and we didn't even have to leave the house, all we had to do was look in our recycling bin.



Gather together a good pair of scissors and a few empty cereal boxes. Cut the large sides off the boxes and draw a large dreidel on each cardboard piece. Cut them out and let the kids collage the cardboard using glue and whatever you have around – old magazines, construction paper, tissue paper. Once the dreidels dry, you can collage the other side of the dreidel, but really, that's optional. Doing just one side is fine.

Afterwards, glue on some huge googly eyes and use cardstock to cut out arms and legs for the dreidel buddies. Punch a hole in the top of the dreidel, add a piece of string and beads and hang your driedel buddies in a doorway. They'll dance whenever you walk by.

Get creative with your kids, but let them take the lead. It's a huge bonding experience, they learn that art is about the process and not the end result and remember, a little glue never hurt anyone.

**Jennifer Wise is a happy mommy of four and the art teacher at the Torah Academy of Jacksonville, Florida. She blogs at the crumbfactory.weebly.com.**