

Lesson Plan for the Fourth Grade

A Great Miracle Happened Here

The fourth grade lessons constitute an introduction to the story of Chanukah on both levels: The miracle of victory in the Maccabean war, and the miracle of the cruse of oil. From there we shall continue to discuss the meaning of the miracle concept and its implications on our lives.

1. Introduction to the story of the Chanukah miracle

Introduction to the stories of the miracle of the cruse of oil, and the victorious Maccabean Revolt. The activity includes an introduction to central traditional texts: The Talmudic story, the For the Miracles (*Al HaNissim*) prayer, and a comparison between them.

2. Meaning of the miracle – wonder and flag

Clarification of the literal and philosophical meanings of the word ‘miracle’ (*ness* in Hebrew); clarification of the difference between a miracle as a wondrous event, the result of divine intervention, and *ness* as a flag – a distinguished, prominent and singular object that people follow.

3. Waiting for a miracle?

After clarifying the meanings of miracle (*ness*), we shall then examine the attitude deriving from the meaning of miracles and whether faith in miracles should exempt one from effort and action? Should we rely on miracles? If so, when?

4. For the Miracles versus No Miracle Happened to Us

Introduction and analysis of Aharon Zeev’s poem: Miracle of the Brave Heart (We Carry Torches), comparison between it and the traditional texts: For The Miracles and the miracle of the cruse of oil story, and discussion of personal attitudes toward miracles.

Story of the Chanukah miracle

1. Preface – reminder of the Chanukah story (may use the adapted story by Malka Haas)
 - a. What do we celebrate on Chanukah?
 - b. Why is Chanukah eight days long?
 - c. Where does the cruse of oil story appear? Where do we know it from?
2. The cruse of oil story in the Talmud
 - a. A brief explanation on the Talmud (when and where it was written, how it is arranged, According to topics, according to the Mishnah)
 - b. Reading the text and explanation of difficult terms.
 - c. What is the miracle? What did they do in wake of the miracle? How is it commemorated?
 - d. According to the story, what is the main idea of Chanukah? In your opinion, why was it important to include this story?
3. Miracle of the war – For The Miracles prayer
 - a. Reading the prayer and explanation of difficult terms.
 - b. Who are the characters in the prayer? Who is the active character? Which character did the most? (May mark actions)
 - c. How is God described in the prayer? (Merciful, fought, judged, avenged)
 - d. How are the People of Israel and the Greeks described? Who are the heroes, and who are the weak ones? Many and few? Pure and impure? Evil and righteous? (May mark opposites)
 - e. Why are the Jews/Maccabees described as weak, few, pure, and righteous? What message is the prayer trying to convey?
 - f. What miracle is the prayer referring to?
 - g. How do the Talmudic story and the prayer differ? How are they similar?

Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 21 b

What is Chanukah? What is [the reason of] Chanukah? For our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [commence] the days of Hanukkah ...for when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest but which contained sufficient for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit [the lamp] therewith for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a Festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving.

Thank You for the Miracles

"And for the miracles, for the redemption, for the mighty deeds, for the saving acts, and for the wonders which You have wrought for our ancestors in those days, at this time.

In the days of Matityahu, the son of Yochanan the High Priest, the Hasmonean and his sons, when the wicked Hellenic government rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and violate the decrees of Your will.

But You, in Your abounding mercies, stood by them in the time of their distress. You waged their battles, defended their rights, and avenged the wrong done to them. You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the wanton sinners into the hands of those who occupy themselves with Your Torah. You made a great and holy name for Yourself in Your world, and effected a great deliverance and redemption for Your people Israel to this very day.

Then Your children entered the shrine of Your House, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your Sanctuary, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your Sanctuary, kindled lights in Your holy courtyards, and instituted these eight days of Chanukah to give thanks and praise to Your great Name."

The Talmud (also known by its Aramaic name: Gemara) is a rabbinical commentary on the Mishnah, developed and disseminated during the Amoraic era, refers to the Jewish scholars of the period following the codification of the Mishnah (early third century). This scholarly work was written mainly as an interpretation of the works of the *tannaim*, writers of the Mishnah and *beraitot*. This scholarship developed simultaneously in Babylon and the Land of Israel, which led to the writing of two Talmuds: The Babylonian (*Bavli*) Talmud and the Jerusalem (*Yerushalmi*) Talmud (in short: The *Bavli* and the *Yerushalmi*). The Babylonian is more popular than the Jerusalem, and Halachic scholars of the generations following the writing of the Talmud accepted the Babylonian Talmud as the basis for ruling Jewish law (*Halacha*) in practice.

At present, the Babylonian Talmud has become (together with the Mishnah) the most important book of Jewish law, and is the most studied book in Yeshivas and among the learned. More works were written on the Babylonian Talmud than on any other book, thus making it the most quoted book in the world of *Halacha*. The Jerusalem Talmud is much less studied, and few are well-versed in its style. It serves mainly for theoretical study, and less for halachic ruling.

Both Talmuds are collections of laws (*halachot*) according to unarranged subjects; rather, summaries of *beit midrash* discussions. It is obvious that they were arranged associatively, following the train of thought of the debaters, and the dynamic of the discussion. In addition, there are sharp transitions from halachic issues to Agada [stories, legends]. Due to this lack of organization, it takes considerable effort to master a Talmudic problem.

Meanings of 'miracle' – wonder and flag

1. Associations for the word miracle.
2. Definition – try and define what a miracle is. What makes an incident or event a miracle?
3. Give examples of miracles from stories you are familiar with (Biblical stories – the plagues of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the burning bush, Moses extracting water from the rock, Gideon asking G-d for signs, and Eliyahu lighting the altar on the Carmel. Folk tales: Snow White's awakening kiss by the prince, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella's carriage and clothes. From everyday life Daytime – stories of rescue from harm during the war, on the road, etc.
4. Reading of the dictionary definition.
5. Discussion:
 - What are the two meanings of miracle (*ness*)?
 - What do the two meanings have in common, and how do they differ?
 - Refer to the stories and examples you gave; which meaning corresponds to each story?
 - Refer to the cruse of oil miracle and Thank You for the Miracles (*Al Hanissim*) prayer. Which meaning best suits these miracles?
6. Publicizing the miracle – read the Talmudic section.

Explain the precept of placing Chanukah candles in the window, facing outside, in order to publicize the miracles. We shall ask: what does the mitzvah have to do with the meaning of the miracles as a wonder, and its meaning as a flag?

Even Shoshan Dictionary – miracle

1. Flag flying on a mast: "Raise a standard toward Zion" (Jeremiah 4: 6)
2. Perhaps expanding the meaning of a) miraculous deed, something supernatural.

Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 21 b

Our Rabbis taught: It is incumbent to place the Hanukkah lamp by the door of one's house on the outside.

Rashi: on the outside, in order to make the miracle public; not in the public domain rather on his premises, since their houses were open to the yard.



Waiting for a miracle!

1. Reuven is waiting for a miracle; read the story until the words: “The reply came immediately”.
 1. What do you think was G-d’s response to Reuven?
 2. Read the end of the story.
 3. What do you think of Reuven’s deeds? What do you think of G-d’s response?
 4. What is the theme of the story?
2. The deed and the miracle, reading of the rabbi’s words: “After the end of the War of Independence, one of the rabbis of Safed told Palmach commander Yigal Alon: **You should know that Safed was saved thanks to two things – actions and miracles...**”
 1. What could the actions and miracles have been?
 2. Read the rest of the section; what, in the rabbi’s opinion, was the action? What in his opinion was the miracle?
 3. What do you think of the rabbi’s interpretation? What is peculiar / strange about this interpretation? To whom do we attribute actions and to whom miracles – military men or religious men?
3. Reliance on miracles in everyday life

We shall present several cases:

- Tali and Roni are fourth grade students, preparing for their final exam. Tali says she will spend the whole afternoon preparing for the exam. Roni says that in any case she will not be able to study and retain it all, so there’s no use in wasting the whole afternoon and getting all stressed out. She hopes that the questions will focus on material she is familiar with, and what was taught in the last lesson.
- Alon and Oren are neighbors and good friends, and go to school and return home together. Alon is very careful. He crosses the street only at the crosswalk where a safety patrol is stationed, always looks carefully before crossing, sometimes waiting several minutes until the road is absolutely clear. Oren, on the other hand, thinks that accidents happen all the time and that it’s all a matter of luck; therefore, he sometimes crosses away from the crosswalk. He thinks that Alon is a bit of a chicken...
 - Shir and Or are sisters, and share a room. Their parents remind them to brush their teeth each night and each morning. Shir takes care to brush her teeth thoroughly. She doesn’t want to have dental problems like her older brother. Or heard her mother say that dental problems are hereditary; therefore, she thinks it doesn’t really matter what she does, and isn’t much of a stickler about brushing her teeth.



- Amnon and Tamar are a married couple, and their economic situation is not so good. Amnon fills in lottery tickets; he hopes that maybe with a miracle he'll win enough money to improve the family's economic situation. Tamar opposes filling in lottery tickets. She considers it a waste of money, since the chance of winning is very small, and that in order to improve their economic situation they need to work overtime.

Guidance:

1. Try and check each character's attitude towards miracles.
2. Which character do you identify / agree with?
3. Does belief in miracles depend on belief in G-d? Can faith in miracles be expressed otherwise? (Belief in luck? In nature?)
4. Do miracles exempt us from making an effort? From trying?

Reuven is waiting for a miracle (The Israeli Haggadah, edited by Mishael and Noam Zion)

Reuven was a man of faith. When he heard that his city was about to be flooded, he didn't worry; he was certain that G-d would save him. When they began to evacuate the neighborhood residents, he stayed put. "Don't worry about me", he told the policemen who came to get him out. On the second day, a rescue boat arrived at the flooded city streets, and once again he turned them away: "Bless the Almighty, there is a G-d in this world and he will save me." The waters kept rising, and on the third day Reuven climbed up to the roof to keep from drowning. A military helicopter located him, and begged him to get on and save himself, but he was undeterred: "I do not need the military, I believe in the Lord, and he will perform a miracle and rescue me." However, the flooding went on, and Reuven ultimately drowned. Red with rage, Reuven went to heaven, and immediately ran to the heavenly throne: "Oh Lord, how could you abandon me, when I put all my trust in you?"

The reply came immediately: "Reuven, three times I sent you a miracle: first the police in a car, then the rescuers in a boat, and I even sent you an army helicopter. What were you waiting for?"

Thanks to action and miracles – Safed in the 1948 war, Zvi Rosenberg

After the end of the War of Independence, one of the rabbis of Safed told Palmach commander Yigal Alon: you should know that Safed was saved thanks to two things – actions and miracles."

What action was taken? When the people of Safed recited Psalms; and what was the miracle? When the Palmach company arrived on time...

If you'd like to hear a story about a real miracle, listen to the story of Safed in Israel's War of Independence. The story of Safed in the War of Independence is a wonderful story of a small group of Jews who just 19 years earlier, during the 1929 riots, waited for the soldiers of the British Mandate to save



Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

them from the wrath of Arab rioters. In 1948, they succeeded in repelling an Arab force superior in weapons, ammunition and of course many more fighters, after nearly six months of almost total siege. Actually, the War of Independence in Safed began several years before the actual fighting broke out. The people of Safed already knew that eventually there would be war, and began to prepare for it with all the meager means at their disposal. Tension between Jews and Arabs began the day after the United Nations Resolution passed on November 29, 1947 that called for the partition of Palestine. On December 13, 1947 Menachem Mizrahi, the first youth-fighter, was murdered. The main road to Safed passed through many Arab neighborhoods, so that the path was in effect blocked from the outbreak of hostilities. Only sometimes, under British protection, supply convoys could brave it through. On April 16, 1948 the British left Safed with no prior notification, relinquishing the important key positions in command of the city. Thus began the sustained 16-hour long attack on the besieged Jewish quarter. The besieged force asked for reinforcement. Yigal Alon, commander of the Yiftach Operation for the liberation of Safed and eastern Galilee, went up to Safed to oversee the second attack to capture the key positions in command of the city, after the failure of the first attack. On May 11, the city of Safed was liberated and all of its Arab inhabitants fled to Lebanon. To this day, the veterans soldiers of Safed remember and remind of the battles of the War of Independence in the city, and several times a year assemble and tour in the wake of the fighters, thanks to whom Jewish Safed held out and triumphed.

The power of faith

The Rabbi of Ruzhyn (may his virtue stand us in good stead) once spoke of mundane matters before prayer and told as follows: The story of a *chassid* who made a very good living by once a year traveling to a fair to buy goods, which included warm clothing to protect from the cold, and over the winter he would sell his wares and made a good living from it. One year, he went to this fair as usual, and brought back a large quantity of goods. However, when winter came no one felt any cold, and he was left with all the merchandise in his possession and without a penny in his pocket. His family cried out for bread, and there was none.

One morning before prayers, the district landowner came to buy all of the goods from him. The *chassid* told him: I don't make any deals before prayers. And the rabbi concluded by saying: Everyone asks, so how does the story end? And I tell them: That is the end of the story; in other words, the extent of the power of faith of a simple *chassid*.

Daniel trusts in G-d

Daniel, 33, married and father of four children got cancer. Daniel decided, contrary to the doctors' opinion, not to undergo chemotherapy. To his concerned family and friends he would say: "I trust in G-d."

Six months later, Daniel passed away.

During the Shiva (seven days of mourning), his friends met and spoke of him.



Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

Moshe: How could it be? Daniel has such firm faith in G-d! It's like a slap in the face to me. All of Daniel's confidence turned out to be unfounded!

Noga: We have no way of knowing what is good and what is bad. Look, you think that Daniel's faith was betrayed because he died; but perhaps, according to divine accounts, this is actually good! Don't forget, there are considerations of the hereafter and reincarnation. In short, Daniel's faith was not in vain.

Avishag: Forgive me, this discussion is totally irrelevant! The shocking fact in this story is that the whole time Daniel was expecting a miracle, but made no effort to help himself. He refused to undergo treatment!

Yitzhak: True, and how could he not think of his wife and children. It is clear to me that in this case he did not have license to "trust" in G-d and behave so irresponsibly!

Eli: He believed in his own way. Until the last minute, he hoped that something would happen. Why are you judging him in the first place? As if there were guarantees for survival for people who go to the doctors and undergo chemotherapy...

Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 39 b

R. Eleazar: Those who are engage in a precept (*mitzvah*) are never harmed; there, when they are going to fulfill the precept, it is different. But R. Eleazar said: Those who are engage in a precept are never harmed, either when going or returning? It was a rickety ladder, so that injury was likely, And where injury is likely **one must not rely on a miracle**, for it is written, And Samuel said: how can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me. (1 Samuel XVI, 2).



For the Miracles and No Miracle Happened to Us

1. Read the poem The Miracle of the Brave Heart (may either recite or sing the composed part: We Carry Torches).
 - Who is the main character in the poem? Who is being spoken of?
 - What is the miracle in this poem?
 - Which meaning of miracle we learned in our previous activities is more compatible with the poem?
2. Compare the miracle of the brave heart to the For the Miracles prayer:
 - Mark similar words or expressions in the prayer and poem.
 - What words and expressions of contradiction or change are there in the poem as opposed to the prayer?
 - What change did Aharon Zeev make in the prayer?
 - Why in your opinion does Zeev use words from the prayer rather than write new words not connected with it?
 - What is the theme of the poem?
3. What do you think of the difference between the prayer and the poem? Which of them do you identify with?
4. Why is it important to learn and preserve the miracle stories, even when in disagreement with their themes?
5. Which meaning of the 'miracle' concept should we adopt in our lives?

The Miracle of the Brave Heart

Lyrics: Aharon Zeev

Music: Mordechai Zeira

These candles that we light...
In honor of the miracles, the wonders
In ancient days and in our times.
Miracles and wonders
Performed by human hands –

The miracle of the brave heart
The wonder of the human spirit
That which triumphed over the armies of great
empires
Exalted the poor, and strengthened the few
And shall give them victory

We carry our torches, in darkest depths of night...
The paths under our feet glow
And whoever has a heart thirsty for light -
Shall raise his eyes and join us in the light
And come !

No miracle has happened to us, no cruse of oil
have we found
To the valley we went, the mountain we climbed
We discovered the springs of the hidden light
No miracle has happened to us, no cruse of oil
have we found
We excavated in the rocks until we bled and
there be light.

Aharon Zeev (Wikipedia)

Born as **Aharon Zeev Weintraub** in east Poland, Zeev graduated the Hebrew high school in Sokolow, and completed his studies at the Seminary for Hebrew teachers. In 1920, during the Polish-Russian war, after the Revolution, Zeev was accused of opening fire on conquering Red Army soldiers; he was sentenced to death, but was saved at the last minute with the help of Jewish friends.

He fled to the center of Poland, changed his identity and certificates, taught in the Hebrew Herzliya school in the city of Kobel, returned to Wolin and then emigrated to the Land of Israel in 1925 under the name Aharon Chernitzky. From the year until his death, he devoted his life to education, first at elementary and high schools, and later on in the Haganah and IDF.

Zeev's first work in Israel was on Kibbutz Degania A. He eventually moved to Tel Aviv and settled in that city. There he taught at the Borochov neighborhood and was one of the founders of the school for laborers' children. He began writing poems and stories especially for his students, who were lacking contemporary, modern Hebrew children's literature. It may be for this reason that his writing for children has a definite storytelling tone, and the dialog between storyteller and listener stands out in it.

In the 1930s, Zeev wrote the song *We Carry Torches*. The song was written in the school of the laborers movement, where Zeev taught. The song was written for the Chanukah march; some say it was written in advance to compete in the Maccabee parade always held on this holiday. The song takes the opposite approach of the traditional Chanukah holiday. It is not miracles that make things happen, rather the pioneers' actions: "No miracle has happened to us, no cruse of oil have we found"; in other words: We ourselves have built the country, and rebuilt the ancient temple. He concludes with the dramatic statement: "We excavated in the rocks until we bled and there be light", which sounds like an affront to the divine act of creation.

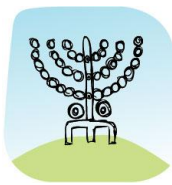
In the beginning of the 1940s Zeev is sent to the United States as an emissary on behalf of the pioneering movement. He traveled America and lectured from coast to coast, meeting with many Jewish communities. Upon the outbreak of war, after only two years, he returned to the Land of Israel on an adventure-filled trip on a freighter sailing through the Indian Ocean.

In 1947 Zeev was sent by the Haganah to the detention camps in Cyprus, to coordinate educational activity in them. Zeev lived among the *Ma'apilim* (immigrants), sharing everything with them, and for this he gained their recognition and love, and was even named "the uncrowned king" of the Cyprus detainees. Upon returning to Israel in 1948 he began working as editor in the Davar for children weekly magazine.

Towards the end of the War of Independence Aharon Zeev was appointed head of the cultural department of the fledgling army. He was among the founders of the Education Corps and among those who formed its character and created its work procedures. His dream was to turn military service into a complementary school for conscripts who had not previously received an education. Zeev served for 15 years as the Israeli army's chief education officer and was discharged at the rank of Colonel. Upon retiring from the IDF, he continued his public service, serving as Chairman of the Association for the Wellbeing of Israeli Soldiers until the day he died.

From the introduction on the history of the Israeli Army radio station *Galei Zahal* published on the station's website: Lieutenant Col. Aharon Zeev, Head of Instruction and Education in the Manpower Division of the General Staff, saw the station as an excellent tool for assisting the IDF in the educational mission it undertook,





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

mainly in the absorption of immigrants.” In Zeev’s own words: “The current level of soldiers requires a unique educational approach, based on instruction and education, achieved by indirect methods, in an appealing and amusing form”.

Aharon Zeev passed away in 1969 and was buried in Tel Aviv.

