

# **THE STRUGGLE OF THE MAACABEES AGAINST THE GREEKS.**

## **Simulation Game for Hanukkah.**

### **Aims:**

Present and review the situation in Eretz Israel in the period of the Maacabees, with special emphasis on the confrontation between Hellenism and Judaism, and on the war of the many against the few.

Analyse the problem of assimilation its implications in the contemporary Jewish context.

**Age:** combination of young people (11-15) and older people (16-18)

**No. Of participants:** about 40

**Time:** full day (including evening)

### **Preparation:**

- The place: an open space or a large hall
- Materials: for drawing, graphics, building and assembly, flags
- Flour and plastic bags
- Instruction sheets for each group
- Loud speakers and microphones (for the “radio station”)
- Slides and maps of Jerusalem; projector
- Instruction sheets.

### **Procedure:**

#### **Division into groups**

Divide the chanichim into several groups (and sub-groups).

Distribute instruction sheets to each group and explain their role in the game.

The group members hold a discussion in order to get into role.

For this, the younger chanichim (11-15) will be assisted by an older chanich, who will guide the discussion, decision-making and any group activity.

#### **The groups:**

1. The Greeks (sub-group: Syrian soldiers)
2. Jewish farmer and artisans

3. Priests
4. Rich Jews
5. The Maacabees
6. Radio station staff

**Basic positions for each group:**

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| <b>Greeks</b>  |
| You want to impose a Greek culture and way of life throughout the East (Eretz Israel is an integral part of Syria). Your aspiration is to achieve political and spiritual unification of all the peoples under your rule, so that they accept your central rule, thus increasing your power. You do not understand why the Jews are the only people in the entire East who for the most part refuse to accept the Greek way of life. |
| <b>Jewish farmers and Artisans:</b>  |
| Most of you are Hasidim who reject Greek culture (and some of you will become extreme opponents later). However, there are those among you who are not adverse to a process of Hellenisation. You constitute the potential target for attempts at persuasion from both sides (Greeks and Hellenists versus the Maacbees and some of the priesthood).   |
| <b>Priests:</b>  |
| Most of you are moderate Hasidim. Your aim is to preserve the integrity and the purity of the Temple, the mitzvot and the Jewish way of life. Some of you, particularly the rich priests, have Hellenistic tendencies. You do not want to quarrel with the authorities, but would like to be allowed to continue to live as in the past.   |
| <b>Rich Jews:</b>  |
| Some of you are moderate Hellenists (who wish to gradually blur the difference between the Jewish people and other peoples). You pay taxes to the Greek Empire and imitate the Greek way of life (sports, wealth, ostentation). A few of you advocate rapid and extreme Hellenization: idolatrous sacrifices, eating pork. You despise Judaism, the Jewish religion and any way of life.   |
| <b>Maacabees:</b>  |
| You define yourselves as guardians of the faith of Israel. You realize that you must actively combat the Greeks (particularly after the cruel edicts and provocations of Antiochus Epiphanies, whose real goal is the eradication of Judaism). Your object is to strengthen the people in their faith and in the Jewish way of life and halt the growth of Hellenization, even if you have to employ force.                          |

**What each group now has to do:**

Each group studies its role, planning its activity in accordance with the presented on the instruction sheet, which it has received, and with the activity proposed below.

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## **BUILDING JERUSALEM**

Each group builds part of the city according to its role. To help them, first project slides showing remains of the city and archeological finds from the second Temple period. Show a map of Jerusalem in this period alongside a map of contemporary Jerusalem.

### **The Greeks:**

Build an army camp (with help of the older participants). The youngster's chanichim decorate this with pictures, photographs, and Greek sculptures they have made, which stress physical strength and beauty.

### **Jewish farmers and artisans:**

The youngster's chanichim draw (olive trees for instance), plant, and prepare plots of land, etc. they also build and draw Menorot, jugs and other items related to the Temple. The older chanichim help to build a tower, several tents and a fence symbolizing the walls (for instance by drawing on Bristol paper with felt tip pens).

### **Priests (and artisans):**

Together with the artisans, the Priests build and draw the Temple, as well as items directly connected with the Temple.

### **The rich Jews:**

Build a model of splendid buildings, a mosaic, and jewels.

### **The Maacabees:**

Make weapons (spears, shields, swords, bows and arrows), coins (for instance from plaster). Prepare hiding places and equipment for life in caves.

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## **INTER-GROUP ACTIVITY**

During the building of the city, each group is told to act out its views:

The Greeks, together with the rich Hellenists, must try to persuade all the Jews of the advantages of Hellenisation. They should mingle with the farmers and the artisans, and try to convince them.

The Syrian soldiers: Their role is also to keep order among the people.

The Priests: Some should begin to support the Greeks and introduce pagan elements into Temple worship, while others should try to prevent them from doing so, by a campaign of persuasion.

The Maacbees (together with the non-Hellenised priests) try to persuade the Jews not to give up their Judaism, so that they will not be engulfed by the nations.

The Radio Station broadcasts news of the period, appropriate music and advertisement corresponding to each of the groups (you can go round the groups offering your services).

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## **THE OPPRESSION AND THE REVOLT**

At this stage, the following announcement is broadcast over the radio:

“By decree of His Excellency, King Antiochus:

- It is forbidden to keep Jewish commandments: the Shabbat, circumcision, etc.
- Jews must participate in ceremonial sacrifices to the Greek gods.
- Jews must eat pork”

This is followed by Acts of Provocation: The soldiers take idols into the Temple.

All of the above leads to the beginning of the revolt of the Maacabees:

The groups prepare posters to express their opinions (another option is a national assembly in which a representative of each group expresses its opinion).

The Maacabees plan the revolt against the Greeks, who plan the oppression. The other groups (the ordinary people, the rich, the priests) adopt positions relating to both sides: (support of the Maacabees or the Greeks, hiding, proposing a compromise position).

Explain the task and give help as required.

NOTE: If there is no consensus within the group, its members may adopt different positions.

The Maacabees have to try to persuade all the people to participate in the war. They do so in secret, without the knowledge of the Greeks and Syrian soldiers.

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## THE WAR

**Procedure:** The Maccabees must remove the Greek flag from the Temple (surrounded by Syrian soldiers) and replace it by the Israeli flag in order to win.

Weapons for the Greeks and Syrian: plastic bags filled with flour. If a bag of flour bursts over one of the Maccabees, he or she is out of the game.

\*\* The artisans, farmer and rich Jews are divided equally between the camps according to the positions, which they adopted in stage 4. The priests are the judges.

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## VICTORY

The entire people destroy the idols in the Temple, and light candles on a Menorah (made by the “artisans”).

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## CLOSING PARTY

The party is to be held in the evening and includes a sing-along, Sufganiyot etc.

A representative of each group summarizes the aim of the group and the Chanich conclusions. The organizer delivers a final summing up, recalling the historical context (emphasizing that it was the Maccabees who triumphed) and draws a link with contemporary Jewish reality: particularly the problem of assimilation and the importance of preserving our specific national Jewish character.

