

THE NATIONAL  
JEWISH  
COMMITTEE  
ON SCOUTING

*Bonfire Lighting  
Ceremony for  
Lag Ba'omer*

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The National Jewish Committee on Scouting is pleased to present to all interested parties a series of basic religious services and resource guides. These resources are intended for use on campouts, in a Pack, Troop or Crew setting or as a Scout observance at a religious institution. They can be freely adapted to any specific situation.

This document was created by Rabbi Rachmiel Tobesman, of the Baltimore Area Council, and further developed through the National Jewish Committee on Scouting. It is intended for the use of Jewish Scouts and Scouters. Through the courtesy of Rabbi Tobesman, this pamphlet was modified to its final form. It is the property of the National Jewish Committee on Scouting. It may be downloaded, copied and modified as necessary for the purpose of learning about or conducting a public event to be held under the auspices of the Boy Scouts of America.

*This booklet has been created by the National Jewish Committee on Scouting. It is designed to assist units and individual Scouts in fulfilling their religious obligations by providing them with a services and programs that they can conduct at home or during a campout. Each Scout is free to adapt this material in keeping with his family and community tradition.*

***Comments, Questions,  
Edits***

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Moderator: While lighting our bonfire this evening, let us reflect on how fire has played a role in Jewish observance from ancient days and onward. We learn from the first sentence of the Torah: Bereishis bara Elokim es hashamayim v'es ha'aretz. In the beginning Hashem created the Heavens and the earth.

The Hebrew word Shamayim (heaven) has been the subject of much discussion. Sefer haBahir, asks: What does the word Shamayim mean? It is something made from eish (which is fire) and mayim (which is water). Hashem kneaded fire and water, and combined them together. This is the meaning of the verse in the Book of Job (Job 25:2) "He makes peace in His heights." He placed peace and love between them. May he also place peace and love among us.

I call on the following scouts to share with us the different roles of fire in Jewish Life.

Scout # 1: I represent the fire of the Jewish heart and home. The Jewish heart has endured the pain of the exile, suffered the countless persecutions, has comforted those in need and has burned with an intense love that no power could break it. The Jewish home is the basis of our belief. It is there we celebrate life, observe holidays and honor one another. The fire of Torah burns bright in every Jewish heart and home.

Scout #2: I represent the Ner Tamid, the Eternal Light. Hashem's light, which burns continually in front of the Ark in the synagogue. It is a reminder of the Menorah that stood in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The fiery words of our prayers and Torah ever ascend to the heaven and rests before the holy One, blessed be He. The Ner Tamid reminds us that Hashem is always present in all of our lives.

Scout #3: I represent the Chanukah Menorah. During Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, candles are lit each day to remind us of the miracle of the Menorah in the Holy temple when the cruse of oil containing only enough oil to last for one day lasted for eight days, thus keeping the flames of the Jewish spirit and souls strong.

Scout #4: I represent the kindling of the Shabbos and yom tov lights. The glow of the Shabbos candles warms the Jewish people and reminds us of the peace of the Sabbath day. Every holiday Jewish women and girls light candles to welcome the special and holy days, but also to add to the joyous atmosphere and domestic happiness of the home.

Scout #5: I represent the Havdalah Candle. Havdalah means Separation. We light the twisted, braided candle and perform the ceremony with wine and spices which bids farewell to Shabbat, ends and separates the holy Sabbath from rest of the week.

Scout #6: I represent the three miraculous holy fires. The first one occurred when God appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush. He called upon Moses to represent the Jewish slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and plead their case to get permission to take them forth to the wilderness so that they could worship God in their own way. The second miraculous fire caused the pillar of smoke by day and the fire by night at the front of the line of march that led the tribes of Israel across the desert. The third miraculous fire occurred on the top of Mount Sinai when amidst flames and lightning and thunder and the blowing of the Shofar God presaged the giving of the Torah to Israel. The Torah teaches us how to live a moral life.

Scout #7:

I represent the flame of the Shoah, the Holocaust, and the memorial candle of Yizkor, Remembrance. We remember loved ones no longer with us with love and deep affection. We remember those who have no one to remember them who perished throughout the ages at the hand of tyrants. Today we stand exultant, our tormentors lost to history. *Am Yisroel Chai*. The people of Israel live!

Moderator:

Now we come to the actual lighting of our bonfire. We are going to have each of our scouts here, in an act of Jewish unity, which will represent our hope for Jewish unity throughout the world, light their torches and with them ignite our fire. The bible tells us in the Book of Numbers, "When we light one flame from another, the new flame gives off light and the original flame continues to burn just as brightly." That is the way we pass our heritage on to the next generation. But today where will the starting flame come from?

It has been said that a Boy Scout can start a fire by using natural materials, not matches. Tell me the truth. By a raise of your hands, has anyone here ever seen that done? Anyone care to try? What would you use?

In keeping with our Lag Ba'omer celebration theme and its ancient origins we have our own Jewish Committee Chairman, Rabbi Tobesman who is going to demonstrate this ancient and primitive fire lighting method. But just in case, does anybody have a match?