

The Story of Hanukkah

The events that inspired the Hanukkah holiday took place during a particularly turbulent phase of Jewish history. Around 200 B.C., Judea—also known as the Land of Israel—came under the control of **Antiochus III, the Seleucid king of Syria**, who allowed the Jews who lived there to continue practicing their religion. His son, **Antiochus IV Epiphanes**, proved less benevolent: Ancient sources recount that he outlawed the Jewish religion and *ordered* the Jews to worship Greek gods. In 168 B.C., his soldiers descended upon Jerusalem, massacring thousands of people and desecrating the city's holy Second Temple by erecting an altar to Zeus and sacrificing pigs within its sacred walls.

Did you know?

1. Antiochus IV Epiphanes was a Gentile King.
2. Epiphanes forced the Jews to worship false gods.

This was a no no!

3. Epiphanes went into the Temple, erecting an altar to Zeus, a false god, and sacrificed pigs on the altar.

This was a no no!

Finally, the Jews fight back!

Led by the Jewish priest Mattathias and his five sons, a large-scale rebellion broke out against Antiochus and the Seleucid monarchy. When Mattathias died in 166 B.C., his son Judah, known as Judah Maccabee (“the Hammer”), took the helm; within two years the Jews had successfully driven the Syrians out of Jerusalem, relying largely on guerilla warfare tactics. **Judah called on his followers to cleanse the Second Temple, rebuild its altar and light its menorah**—the gold candelabrum whose seven branches represented knowledge and creation and were meant to be kept burning every night.

The Hanukkah 'Miracle'

According to the *Talmud*, one of Judaism's most central texts, Judah Maccabee and the other Jews who took part in the rededication of the Second Temple witnessed what they believed to be a miracle. Even though there was only enough untainted olive oil to keep the menorah's candles burning for a single day, the flames continued flickering for eight nights, leaving them time to find a fresh supply. This wondrous event inspired the Jewish sages to

The Talmud is a collection of writings that covers the full gamut of Jewish law and tradition, compiled and edited between the third and sixth centuries. Written in a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, it records the teachings and discussions of the great academies of the Holy Land and Babylonia. With 2,711 densely packed pages and countless commentaries, learning Talmud is the occupation of a lifetime.

proclaim a yearly eight-day festival.

Did you know?

The story of Hanukkah does not appear in the Torah because the events that inspired the holiday occurred after it was written. It is, however, mentioned in the New Testament, in which Jesus attends a "Feast of Dedication."

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Did you know?

Hanukkah is a Jewish festival that commemorates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after the Maccabees' victory over Greek oppression in 166-160 B.C.
123.

It is also called the Feast of Dedication and is mentioned only once in the Bible, in the New Testament Book of John 10:22,

“And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.”

In this verse, Jesus attends the festival and has a confrontation with the Jews who accuse him of blasphemy for claiming to be one with God.

Conclusion

The oil lasting eight days was a miracle proving that God never leaves us nor forsake us.

Even though no prophet spoke, God was still working things out for our good.