

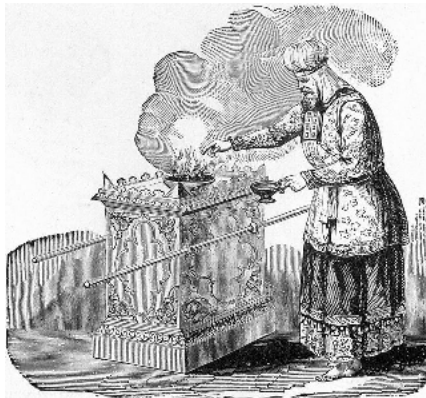


The Miracle of Hanukkah

Background

There is a 400 year gap between the end of the writing of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. Do you think the people just froze in a spot and didn't move for 400 years? How about everyone get up and dance/ move/walk around and

then FREEZE for 400 years—do you think you can do that? Of course not! People were still eating, going to work, having baby brothers and sisters who grew up to become mommys and daddys. Time passed. During this time, there was a Jewish family called the Hasmoneans. But we know them better by their well-earned nickname—the Maccabees. That means “hammers!” They loved God and wanted to follow in His ways. They lived close to Jerusalem.



In Jerusalem, the Greeks were running the city. They did what they wanted, they didn't care about the Jewish people and they didn't respect the Temple—the place where God's glory, like a cloud, hovered (like mist in the valleys in the morning). The Temple was important to the Jewish people because as Israelites, they would give sacrifices there. The Lord was pleased with their offerings and forgave their sins. Now that the Greeks were running the Temple, they wanted to do something absolutely horrible. They knew that the Jewish people did not eat pig/ham because God told them not too. To the Jewish people, it was like touching the slimiest, squishiest, bloodiest, dirtiest, drooliest,

muddiest thing that could ever be thought of. So, the Greeks decided to bring a pig to the Temple and offer a sacrifice to the Greek gods. The One True God was not pleased with this!

The Maccabees heard about this and became really angry. They decided to raise up an army of rebels to take back Jerusalem and the Temple. Against the odds, the Maccabees were successful. After their great victory, they went to the Temple and were so excited to worship God there. However, they were soon disappointed. They realized that the once-beautiful Temple was now nasty and dirty because the Greeks did horrible things to the building and all the special furniture



and holy things inside. They had to clean and rededicate the Temple.

The Miracle

They needed to light a lamp to welcome the Spirit of the Lord and the oil for the lamp had to be pure oil. (They didn't have modern candles with wax and wicks (show a candle/tea light), but a bowl they filled with oil and a wick on the surface that was lit. The light burned because of the sacred oil (show an ancient candle pot or a picture of one). After cleaning the Temple, they found only a day's worth of a jar of pure lamp oil.

What were they to do since it takes eight days to purify the sacred oil and the light HAD to be lit!? They prayed and expected a miracle from the Lord!

A miracle did happen—the oil which was just enough for one day, lasted eight days! The people were so happy—they had their Temple back. It was pure and holy to worship God in AND He made a miracle by providing enough oil. Hanukkah is sometimes called the Feast of Dedication because it was the time when the Israelites rededicated the Temple.

Lots of Oil

At Hanukkah, you can find lots of oily things to eat—to remember the oil that lasted until more pure oil could be made.

You can fry shredded potatoes and some onions (like hash browns) into a pancake and eat it with sour cream or apple sauce. These are called **latkes** in Yiddish and are they are soooooo tasty. You can also have a warm doughnut just out of the fryer. Be careful, sometimes there is jam or caramel sauce in the middle and it is hot. In Hebrew, these are called **sufganiyot**.



Finally, you can light a Hanukkah **Menorah**, a nine candle stand. Each night a candle is lit to remember the eight days of Hanukkah. Did we mention there were nine candles? The extra candle is called the Servant Candle and it is used to light each candle.

Children will also play with a **dreidle**, a spin top with four sides.

Application

Even though this story is not recorded in our Bible, it happened and it is something we can remember. Hanukkah is mentioned in the New Testament in the Gospel of John in the tenth chapter. There it is called the Feast of Dedication.

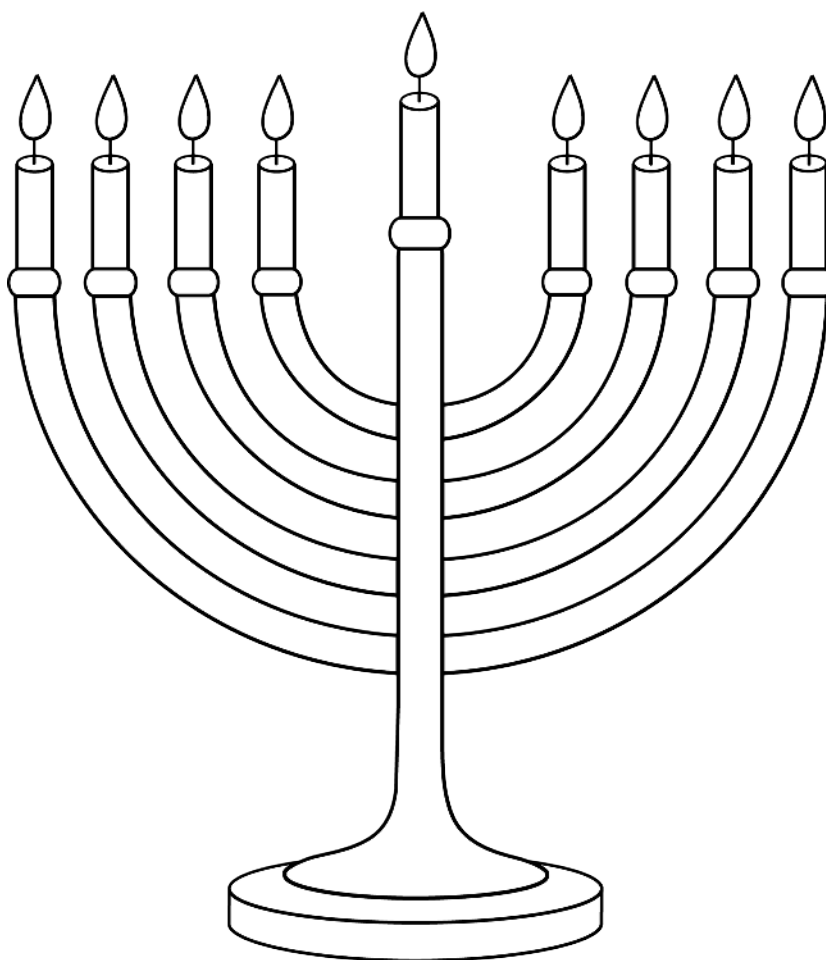
Hanukkah reminds us that the Temple is a holy place where God's people would worship and rejoice. But we cannot worship and rejoice in a place that is uncared for or where there are things that must be gotten rid of. After the people cleaned up the Temple and rededicated it, they were able to worship God with a pure heart.

For us, our lives and our bodies are a Temple of the Lord. Are there things we are doing that do not please God? Things we say or think or do? Or we sometimes jealous or mean to others? Let's take eight days, like the time it takes to purify more oil, to try to get rid of the bad things in our life and make it pure, like a Temple. We will check in with each other next week.

Craft:

Supplies: Construction paper, scissors, markers, colored cellophane, gluestick

Have the kids draw a Menorah (show a picture example and make sure they make nine candles. The Servant candle can be the first of nine or in the middle, four on each side. The Servant Candle is often bigger than the others). Have them cut out the hotdog shape of the candle. On the back of the paper, have them pick different colors of cellophane so each candle will be shiny and different. Glue the cellophane on the back. Do the same for the flame. Color the base of the menorah.



Action:

Do you want to physically clean our place or worship?! (Meet one day during the week or a weekend to clean the congregation/church—for a deep clean and organize. A great activity for kids and parents. During the activity, show the kids some sacred church/congregation items and explain why they are important and revered. As well, explain the importance of taking care of Bibles and how they are sacred in other parts of the world.)