

## **#1**

**The Hanukkah story:** The Jewish holiday Hanukkah literally lights up the home. The eight-day, 2,000-year-old holiday, also called the Festival of Lights, celebrates God's glory, an ancient victory of the Jews over their enemies, and the freedom that Jews enjoy today.

The story of Hanukkah begins in strife. Antiochus, a Greek who was king of Syria, marched with an army of soldiers into the kingdom of Judea, home to many Jews. He insisted that the Jews worship the Greek gods rather than the one God they worshipped. When the Jews refused to worship the Greek gods, the soldiers attacked the Temple in Jerusalem and killed countless Jews.

## **#2**

### **1 Maccabees Chapter 1 Verses 21-28**

[21] He (Antiochus) arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils.

[22] He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off.

[23] He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures which he found.

[24] Taking them all, he departed to his own land. He committed deeds of murder, and spoke with great arrogance.

[25] Israel mourned deeply in every community,

[26] rulers and elders groaned, maidens and young men became faint, the beauty of women faded.

[27] Every bridegroom took up the lament;  
she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning.

[28] Even the land shook for its inhabitants,  
and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame.

### **#3**

The Syrians stole holy objects. They even stole the sacred lamp, called the menorah, that stood before the altar. The lamp's flame, which always burned brightly, went out. That had *never* happened before. Special oil stored in small containers called cruses was always used to keep the flame alive. The soldiers dumped the oil all over the floor. As a last insult, they let pigs roam inside the Temple.

The king returned to his own country, but the soldiers stayed in Jerusalem. They did not respect the Jewish Temple. They brought food and drink in, played noisy games, and shouted and laughed there. Jews could not say their prayers in the Temple.

### **#4**

Judah the Maccabee, along with his family hid in the forest and started a resistance. For two years the Jews fought their enemy. Then one night the Jews attacked Jerusalem, the enemy stronghold. They surrounded the Syrians and would not allow food or water to enter the city. Judah the Maccabee and his followers camped outside Jerusalem all winter. When the people inside the city had no food or water left, Judah the Maccabee attacked with his friends and family and overwhelmed the enemy. The Jews were finally free from the Assyrians!

One of the first tasks of the Jews was to clean up the Temple. They restored the holy lamp -- the menorah -- but found only enough clean and holy oil to last one day. Not just any oil could be used to light the menorah, special oil blessed by the priests was required. To bless the oil properly the Jewish Priests would need seven days. But there was only enough oil for one.

## **#5**

They lit the menorah, knowing that it only had one day worth of oil, but a miracle occurred! The flames of the menorah burned steadily for eight days! With each passing day, the flames grew brighter. From then on, every year during the winter months, (It changes dates each year.) Jews celebrate the Festival of Lights in order to remember when they restored the Temple of their God. Candles are lit at sundown for eight nights in a row. Today's menorahs have nine branches; the ninth branch is for the shamash, or servant light, which is used to light the other eight candles.



## **#6**

It is traditional to eat foods fried in oil on Hanukkah, to commemorate the miracle of Hanukkah which occurred with oil.

It is also customary to eat dairy foods during the holiday.

It is typical on Hanukkah to give money gifts to children, and to play *dreidel* games. It is also customary to give an increased amount of charity each day of Hanukkah.