

Gem Seeking

LITTLE GEMS STORY

Parent/Teacher Preparation:

Please see the [Instructions for the Little Gems Story](#) on the YMTOI website. This will help you to understand how to prepare for the story.

Here is the link for a reading of this story:

https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/steveberkson/episodes/2021-11-16T10_28_13-08_00

The Story of Chanukah

Shalom children! Okay, who can tell me what holiday we celebrate right near the end of each year? I'll give you a hint (**place 9-branch oil chanukiah on board**). It's a holiday where we light candles and eat yummy fried foods! It's NOT Christmas; we know Yahweh doesn't want us to celebrate that! Ahh, did I hear someone say Chanukah? That's right! The Bible does not actually say for us to celebrate Chanukah, but it's a very good thing to do. Did you know that Yeshua Himself was in the temple during the festival of Chanukah? (**Place temple on board.**) The story of how Chanukah started is told in the Book of Maccabees. There we meet some Jewish heroes of long ago, who obeyed Yahweh's commandments, even if they had to die for it. Wow, I would like to have that kind of courage and faith; how about you? These heroes won a great victory over evil, so the Yehudim could once again follow Yahweh freely. So, one reason to honor Chanukah is to remember their shining example of faith.

You see, once upon a time, long before Yeshua was born, there was a very proud Greek king named Antiochus. (**Place Antiochus on board.**) Can you say his name with me? An-TIE-uh-kus. Very good—you got his name right. But let me tell you, King Antiochus was anything but good! While he and his army were on their way home from conquering Mitsrayim, he decided it would be cool to beat up the Yisra'elites, too, and take Yerushalayim for himself. The Yehudim there ended up with a pagan king who hated their religion. That wicked Antiochus burned up the Torah and all their holy books with fire. (**Place Torah scroll on board.**) Anyone caught studying Scriptures would be killed on the spot. Any men who showed they belonged to Yahweh suffered horrible things from the king's soldiers.

Even worse, this pagan ruler went into Yahweh's beautiful Holy Place and made it totally yucky and unclean to Yahweh. He set up a statue of himself right in the Temple, and we know that Yahweh hates idols—especially in His House! The king made it even worse by offering unclean animals on Yahweh's altar, like pigs. Ugh! (**Place pig on board.**) He even brought elephants into the temple. (**Place elephants on board.**) Greek people began to move into the neighborhood, who thought it was fun to do lots of things that the Elohim of Yisra'el had forbidden. Many Yehudim then decided that the pagan Greek stuff was too much fun to miss. They forgot they were Yahweh's chosen people and began to act like Greeks, always breaking Yahweh's covenant.

(Remove all characters from board.)



But not all the Yehudim! Let's meet our heroes. Everybody shout, "TA-DAAA!" Yes! **(Place Mattathias and 5 sons on board.)** It's our brave Jewish family, the Maccabees! The head of their clan was Mattathias, the priest. **(Point to Mattathias.)** Now, you may not think of a priest as being a fierce warrior, but when battle skills were needed, you could count on Mattathias. Better yet, he had 5 sons who were all fierce fighters, too. His oldest son Judah won so many victories that people called him "Judah the Hammer." **(Point to Judah and 4 brothers.)** The Maccabees got many faithful Yehudim to join them. They trained their men to strike the enemy suddenly, then escape to their hideout in the hills—just like a bunch of Western outlaws. **(Place group of men on board.)** Time after time, Judah and his men beat up the Greek army of Antiochus. The king's soldiers kept trying to catch them, but no such luck. After years of fighting, at last the Maccabees recaptured Yerushalayim. What a day that was—the streets rocked with victory shouts and halleluyahs! **(Place joyous people on board.)**

(Remove all characters from board.)

The Maccabees didn't waste a minute. They called for all the priests and cleansed the Temple from top to bottom. **(Place temple on board.)** They built a new altar that had never seen an unclean offering. **(Place priest near altar on board.)** The Holy Place got all set up again, just the way Yahweh had commanded. The Yehudim had been very sad for a very long time, with no place to gather and learn Yahweh's Word or to enjoy His feasts. **(Place sad people on board.)** The priests wanted to please both Yahweh and His people by dedicating the Temple as soon as they could.

This dedication would be a huge event. The dates for Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret had passed, so they decided to celebrate this festival of rededication for 8 days. It would begin on the 25th of Kislev which can be in November or December. **(Place calendar on board.)** How exciting! The Temple would once more honor Yahweh alone—no more pigs or idol-statues, ever!

But there's even more to the story. Jewish books tell a story about a wonderful miracle that happened while the Maccabees were celebrating, right inside the Holy Place. Hmm...I wonder what this miracle could be. Let's find out.

It started because the 7 lamps on top of the menorah had been blown out years earlier by Antiochus. We know that Yahweh told His people to always keep the oil lamps burning on the menorah. But now they had to be lit up again. The problem was, the menorah must burn oil that had to be prepared by the priests, and there was only enough oil for one day of light. **(Place bottle of oil on board.)** It would take a whole 8 days to prepare new oil.

Now, what do you think the priests did? Did they call it off and send everyone home? No, I don't think so! The dedication must go on. So maybe they said, "Oh, Yahweh will understand if we use plain old oil in His menorah this time—it's just for a week, and then we'll have the new holy oil ready." No way! After all, Elohim had just given them a miraculous victory, and they must do everything His way. So, the priests lit the lamps with their little bit of olive oil, trusting that Yahweh was somehow able to take care of the problem. And that's when the miracle happened. Can anyone guess? **(Place 7-branch menorah on board.)** Sure enough, they say that the lights in the Temple kept on burning for all 8 days, on just one day's worth of oil.



Now, we can't prove whether or not it really happened, but it sure sounds like something our wonderful Elohim might do. That's why Chanukah is called the Festival of Lights. Each year, a couple of months after we've enjoyed Sukkot, we get another 8 days of joy and feasting. Boy, Yisra'elites sure do like to have fun, don't they? **(Remove sad people and place joyous people on board.)**

Let's talk about everyone's favorite things to do during these 8 days. Has anyone ever made their own Chanukiah? **(Place Chanukiah on board.)** Say it with me children, 'Han-uh-KEE-ah.' It's kind of a 'mini-menorah' for your home, and holds not just 7, but 9 candles. One of these candles stands a bit higher than the rest. It is called the shamash, or servant candle. **(Point to shamash.)** The shamash is always lit first, then each night one more candlelight is added until the final night, when all 9 candles are glowing. Each candle-lighting is done with prayers of blessing and thanks to Yahweh for saving us. How happy we are to honor Him in our homes, with beautiful lights, family, friends, and good food!

(Remove all characters from board.)

Mmm, food. Let's talk about the yummy things we get to eat during Chanukah. Chanukah treats are fried in oil, to honor the miraculous story of the oil supply. One of the favorites are latkes. **(Place latkes on board.)** Can you say it with me? It's "LOT-kuhs." You may know it as fried potato pancakes. Our brother Yehudah likes to put applesauce, sour cream and chives on top! **(Place applesauce, sour cream and chives on board.)** How does that sound to you? What do you like to place on yours? **(Allow children to answer.)** Another oil-fried dessert is sufganiyot— sugared jelly doughnuts oozing with red jam. **(Place sufganiyot on board.)** Ok let's try to say this one together, 'SOOF-ga-NEE-ot.' Just be careful you don't eat too many!

While the candles are burning, families often sit down to play a favorite Chanukah game, using a four-sided spinning top called a dreidel. **(Place 4 dreidels on board.)** It was invented in the time of Antiochus, when Yehudim would gather secretly to discuss Torah. If soldiers banged on the door, they would spin their dreidels to fool the soldiers into thinking they were just playing games. A dreidel has 4 Hebrew letters—nun, gimel, hey and shin, one on each side. **(Point to 4 letters.)** Together they spell, 'Nes Gadol Haya Sham,' which means, 'A Great Miracle Happened There.' Children who study Torah during Chanukah are rewarded with gold-wrapped chocolate coins called gelt. **(Place gelt on board.)** If the top lands on the right Hebrew letter you may win all the chocolate coins. But if it lands on the wrong letter, you could lose it all!

As we enjoy this year's Festival of Lights, let's remember that Chanukah is also the Feast of Dedication. Let's choose to obey and honor our Good King Yahweh—even more than we did last year and dedicate ourselves to Him alone! Well, that's all for today, children. We will see you next time for another exciting Little Gems story! Chag Chanukah Sameach! Happy Feast of Chanukah!

