



The Story of Hanukkah for Maui Teens

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What are the stories that shape the way we think about things? Take a moment and think about which life stories shaped who you are today. Thousands of years ago, when our people were indigenous to the Holy Land, we recorded stories to shape us as a nation. Some of these stories were told to strengthen us as a people for the ‘obligatory wars’ we had to fight. And then there were the ‘optional wars’ fought for the nation’s glory. Even when winning the ‘optional wars’ we tended to lose.

From the time of Alexander the Great, Greek leaders supported and favored sacrifices in the Second Temple of Jerusalem. We even have records of them paying for the sacrifices themselves:

“All was well up until the time of Onias the High Priest. This was the time that the Greek kings themselves honored the Temple, and magnified it as a Wonder of the World with their best gifts. This was such the case that Seleucus IV of Asia used his own revenues to bear all the costs belonging to the service of the sacrifices.

One day the new Governor of the Temple, Shimon of the tribe of Benjamin, fell out with the High Priest Onias about disorder in the city. When he could not overcome Onias, he turned him over to the regional Greek governor Apollonius, and told him that the treasury in Jerusalem was full of infinite sums of money, so that the multitude of their riches, which did not pertain to the account of the sacrifices, was innumerable, and that it was possible to bring it all into Antiochus’ hands.”¹

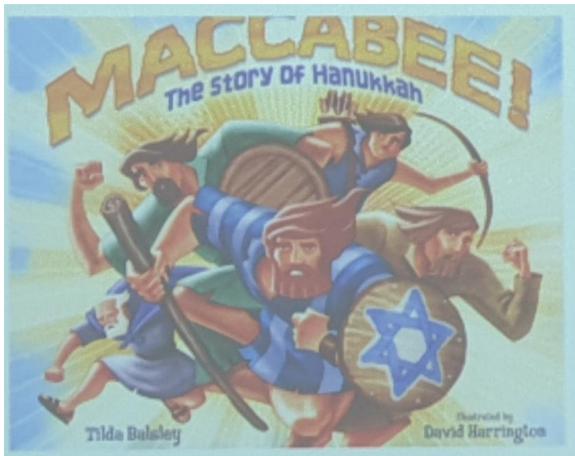
As the High Priests and their supporters fought political wars among themselves for who could outbid to pay the most taxes on behalf of Judea, the Hasmonean revolt of Hanukkah began.

During the time when we were sovereign in our Land, it was important to teach the Book of Maccabees. It gave us a clear national identity and instructed us how to watch ourselves for Hellenistic influence. Alas, the Rabbis learned that expressing such sentiments in a

¹ My modern translation of 2 Maccabees 3:1-6

Greco-Roman Empire would cause dangerous nationalist tendencies among the people. So the Talmud was written and on a section discussing wicks and oils, the story is told:

<p>The Gemara asks: What is Hanukkah, and why are lights kindled on Hanukkah? The Gemara answers: The Sages taught in Megillat Ta'anit: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the days of Hanukkah are eight. One may not eulogize on them and one may not fast on them. What is the reason? When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary by touching them. And when the Hasmonean monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that was placed with the seal of the High Priest, undisturbed by the Greeks. And there was sufficient oil there to light the candelabrum for only one day. A miracle occurred and they lit the candelabrum from it for eight days. The next year the Sages instituted those days and made them holidays with recitation of <i>hallel</i> and special thanksgiving in prayer and blessings</p>	<p>מאי חנוכה? דתנו רבנן: בכ"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון דלא למספד בהון ודלא להתענות בהון. שפשינגנסו יונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שפיהיכל. וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום, בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד. נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים. לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה.</p>
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Questions for Discussion:

Here we imagine the Jewish warriors of old, standing up for the Torah against an Evil Empire intent on ending us as a people.

What story is missing based on our own historical record in the Book of Maccabees?

What story should we be telling each and every year now that we are sovereign in our Land and yet have been tempered by the values of democracy?



The story that we must tell is one of inclusion. A story where women and girls, Muslims and Christians can all take part in a new story of ‘dedication’ (i.e. Hanukkah). A Dedication for a Shared Society where we have learned to listen to other stories and experiences while lighting our Hanukkiyah the way Hillel taught us.

In November of 2019, [Spirit of the Galilee](#) brought together 250 people to celebrate an inclusive Hanukkah.