

Celebrating Hanukkah with your Hospice Families



“Hanukkah, O Hanukkah, come light the Menorah; let’s have a party we’ll all dance the Hora!” These are the opening lines to a well-known traditional Hanukkah song which describes people enjoying delicious foods, merry hearts and family gatherings remembering the heroic deeds of our ancestors in the warm glow of the Hanukkah lights. For eight nights we celebrate the many miracles that the Holy One did for our people over 2,000 years ago at this very time of year, the 25th of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar.

This story can be found in the book of Maccabees I, and II. A “history in a nutshell” version retells of the grassroots movement of the oppressed Hebrew people under the Greco-Syrian rule to win freedom. The ruling tyrant Antiochus forbade any practice of the Sacred Ways (such as Shabbath and worship in the Temple). The Temple in Jerusalem had become the party-house for the invaders and many Hebrew families were tortured for their adherence to their faith.

This grassroots movement of rebellion soon grew to be an army in the hills who struck out for freedom and against all odds (the Greeks used elephants as their artillery tanks!) they took back their country in the first war waged for religious freedom of worship. However, the Temple was desecrated.

The priesthood immediately took to cleaning, clearing and restoring the Temple. It was ready for rededication to sacred worship but there was only one vial of consecrated oil found for the Menorah. The glow of the lights of the Temple was the symbol of G-d’s presence (there are no windows in the Temple for light). It would take 8 days for the Priests to make new consecrated oil. The priests poured the vial of oil into the Menorah and kindled the wicks; the light rose up filling the Holy Place ~ and their hearts were rekindled at that moment, as well. But, there were eight days to go; surely the oil would be used up and leave the Temple in darkness once more. Miracle of miracles! The next day the Menorah still glowed; and the next and the next, for eight days, until the new oil was ready! The Light was sustained!



The miracles of the story of Hanukkah teach us to start with what we have and watch the faithfulness of G-d do the rest, in whatever situation we have at this season.

Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days, kindling just the “helper” candle (from which we kindle the other lights) and one candle the first night, then two the second night; and so on until on the eighth night the helper candle and all eight candles are glowing...”one for each night, they shed their sweet light, to remind us of days long ago” as the Hanukkah song continues.

