

Leor Who Kindled Light

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For grades 3-7

Characters:

Narrator

The Maccabees

Judah

Simon

Yochanon

Jonathan

Eleazer

Leor, a child age 10

Leor's Parent

Set Induction:

If someone asked you what the miracle of the Hanukkah story is, what would you say?

In this creative reimagining of the Hanukkah story, a child named Leor (whose name means 'my light') encourages the Maccabees to light the menorah with the little bit of oil that they discover in the ravaged Temple. Courage in the face of destruction is an important lesson from the Hanukkah story that can inspire us as we celebrate today.

The Narrator enters the stage

Narrator: The year is 166 BCE, the place is the city of Jerusalem, where an army of Jewish soldiers led by Judah Maccabee and his brothers have amazingly defeated the much bigger armies of the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes. For years, the Syrian-Greek ruler had made it impossible for the Jewish people to practice their religion. They were forbidden to keep Shabbat or read from the Torah. Then Antiochus said the Jews must worship Greek idols. Many Jewish people tried to practice Judaism in the privacy of their homes but when Antiochus' soldiers demanded that they must make sacrifices to idols in public or face death, it was time to revolt.

From their small town of Modin, north of Jerusalem, Judah Maccabee prepared Jewish soldiers, hiding in caves, for their big fight.

The Syrian-Greek army was not afraid of this little band of Jewish revoltors. 50,000 Syrian-Greek soldiers marched into Jerusalem to defeat them. The Maccabees' army only had 12,000 soldiers. Yet, they outmaneuvered their opponents and forced them to flee north.

When the Syrian-Greek soldiers were gone, the Maccabees entered their holy Temple. This is what they found...

Simon: Come on inside, brothers, let's see what remains of the Temple--

Jonathan: Everything...is...destroyed.

Yochanan: This is worse than I even imagined.

Elezar: We were too late...

Judah: Come on, brothers, Maccabees don't despair. We drove our oppressors out. The Temple is ours again.

Simon: We should start cleaning it.

Jonathan: I don't know where to begin. Idols are everywhere.

Yochanan: Look, the menorah is flickering. Somehow, it is still lit--

Elezar: But we need oil to keep it lit. There's no oil left.

Judah: There must be one jar of oil somewhere, look under the rubble--

They search under the rubble.

Simon: I found it! One tiny jar of oil...

Jonathan: Let me see. (pause). That's all? This little jar will last maybe for a day...

Yochanan: We need more.

Elezar: It will take seven more days to get holy oil. This little vat will never last.

A knocking sound is heard.

Judah: Did you hear that? It must be one of the Syrian soldiers who escaped. Guard the doors!

A voice is heard from off stage.

Leor: Hello? Maccabees? I want to come into the Temple to help you!

Simon: It sounds like a child.

Jonathan: Don't be fooled. There's probably a soldier--or a dozen of them behind him...

Yochanan: Get your swords.

Leor: I am a Jewish child, I live here in Jerusalem. My brothers and sisters and I just watched you drive out the Syrian army. Please let me come in--

Elezar: Judah, what do you think?

Judah: Swords up--open the door.

Leor enters.

Simon: Who sent you here, child?

Leor: No one...only me. I watched you take back the Temple--and I want to help you to clean it up so we can have our Temple back again.

Jonathan: You are brave to come here, by yourself.

Yochanan: Leor, we won't be able to rededicate this Temple. We found only enough oil to light the menorah for maybe one day.

Elezar: It will take seven days for a priest to make more oil...it's hopeless.

Judah: Thank you for coming, Leor. If you were older, I would have made you a soldier in my army. It is too late to rededicate the Temple now. By the time we remove all of the idols, the light will go out.

Leor: Couldn't we try, Judah Maccabee? We could use this little jar of oil to light the menorah and see...maybe this tiny bit will last until we can get more.

Simon: That's crazy.

Jonathan: Ridiculous.

Yochanan: There's much to do to reclaim our country, we don't have time for foolishness.

Elezar: Go home, child.

Leor: Wait--listen--please. For years, my family and I have had to pretend. Everytime my parents wanted to teach us Torah, we always had spinning tops nearby so if a Greek soldier came by the house, we could hide our books and pretend we were just playing games. When we found out that we could no longer light candles for Shabbat, one of us kids would watch out the window all night to make sure that no one saw the tiny candle light. We grew up being terrified of the soldiers but we loved the traditions that our parents taught us. Every night before I would go to sleep, I prayed for courage to keep being brave...

Judah: Leor, it is because of children like you that we Maccabees fought. Our Jewish teachings are sacred to us and we want a world where children are free to learn. But my child, we can not rededicate the Temple now. There is simply not enough oil here to last more than a day.

Leor: Maybe not...but we should have the courage to light it anyway. To imagine that the light will last. My parents told me about the Maccabee soldiers, hiding in caves, who would one day drive the Syrians out of the Temple. No one believes it could really happen, but I did.

Simon: Leor, you are very convincing--

Jonathan: Maybe we should try it--

Yochanon: It would be a miracle:

Elezar: I think Leor's courage...is the real miracle.

Judah: Come Leor, you do it. Open this jar of oil.

Judah hands the jar to Leor. Leor opens it.

Judah: Pour it into the menorah...

Leor pours the oil.

Simon: Now what?

Jonathan: We wait and see.

Yochannon: I will go find one of the priests who has been hiding...so he can prepare more holy oil.

The voice of Leor's parent is heard offstage.

Leor's parent: Leor! Leor! Where are you? Leor--we've looked everywhere!

Elezar: Your family is looking for you, Leor--

Leor: I ran off--to come here--I had to help--

Judah (calling out to the street): In here. Your child Leor is safe.

Leor's parent enters and embraces Leor.

Parent: Leor! We were so worried about you. With a battle going on--we couldn't find you--

Leor: I'm very sorry that I worried you (Aba/Ema). I didn't leave our home until I saw the Syrian army was gone. But when we heard that the Maccabees had reclaimed the Temple, I knew I had to be here to help them.

Simon: Leor has so much courage. Because of Leor, we decided to light this menorah with only this tiny jar of oil.

Parent: Oh Leor, I am so glad that you are safe. It has not been easy for any of us parents, trying to teach our children Torah...and trying to hide our religion from the Syrian soldiers.

Jonathan: Things will get better now.

Elezar: We have our Temple back. Yochanon has gone to get more holy oil.

Parent: But won't that take at least seven days?

Judah: Yes, it will. But Leor inspired us to light the menorah anyway. We are going to keep faith that the oil we have is enough.

Simon: Let's start cleaning.

Jonathan: These idol statues are heavy but together we can carry them out.

Leor: I'll help!

Parent: Of course you will, my child.

Narrator: And as you know...the Maccabees were able to clean up the Temple. And amazingly, just as Leor had hoped, the story goes that the small amount of oil that was found lasted until more oil was brought to the Temple.

Many think of the oil lasting for eight days as the miracle of Hanukkah. But we know that the real miracle was the courage that it took to believe in light and miracles. To believe that after a dark time, the light of freedom could shine again.

Discussion Questions:

- What were the Maccabees' fighting for? What kind of freedom did they want?
- How did they feel when they entered the Temple? What was their response to finding a small jar of oil?
- In what way did Leor show courage?
- Can you think of a time in your life when you had to find courage? What did that experience feel like?

Extending Activities:

- Make a comic book version of the Hanukkah story.
- Draw a picture of or write a story about a time when you showed courage.
- Create a rap or poem from the perspective of one of the Maccabees.