



THE DIALOGUE

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IT'S CHANUKAH!

By: Shula Bryski

Daniel gave his father a high-five as they finally reached the top of the steep mountain. "We did it!" said Daniel excitedly. He was proud that he finished this really tough hike with his dad. It wasn't easy climbing way, way up, but they finally made it to the top, and he felt good about himself!

"We sure did," agreed his dad. "Why don't you have a look around while I set up our lunch?"

Daniel liked that plan. He strolled around the flat surface at the top of the mountain, being sure not to wander too far from where his dad was preparing their food.

They were so high up, he could see dozens of mountains and valleys, and some homes that looked like little shoe boxes in the midst of thick trees and yet more mountains and valleys. And when he turned to his left, he could see the waters of the ocean, which seemed to sparkle with diamonds in the sun. "Wow!" he exclaimed, "Look at Hashem's world!" He felt like he had the best view of it all, here on this high mountain top.



"Wow, indeed," said a voice behind him. "Being high up sure comes in handy when you're preparing for battle!"

Daniel whirled around, "Dad, what are you----" He stopped in mid-sentence when he realized that his dad was nowhere in sight, there was only a boy, dressed in armor, with a fabulous copper shield.

"Hey there," said the boy, with a twinkle in his eye. "No need to stare at me like that! We may look really different, but you know, after all of these hundreds of years, kids still like to play and have a good time."

"You're hundreds of years old!?" asked an astonished Daniel.

"I'm not sure I'd say that!" laughed the boy, "I lived over twenty-three hundred years ago. I was one of the Macabees who fought the Greeks!"

"Wow!" said Daniel once more, "that must have been awesome!"

"Well, Hashem certainly showed us some awesome miracles," agreed the Macabee, "but it wasn't all fun. It was hard work, even a bit scary!"

"Well, fighting a war is pretty scary," agreed Daniel, "So what made you keep going when things got tough, scary even?"

The Macabee's eyes sparkled. "This was my way of showing what being a Jew means to me. The Greeks wanted to take my Jewishness away from me, and I thought, no way! There's no way I'll let them take that away from me! I have the freedom to think, and feel and do Jewish things! And I knew I would defend it - for myself, and for all the others, too. And because I believed so strongly, I just kept going, even when it got really tough."

"Hmmm," thought Daniel out loud, "I can't say I fight huge armies to express my Jewish identity, but I guess we all put in effort to show it - some more and some less! Like, I work hard to get to Hebrew School on time on Sundays, to learn all about Judaism (being a Jew?). I try to keep my kippah on the whole time whenever my family goes to synagogue, even though it's slippery and falls off a lot- it makes me feel proud when I wear it! I also try to practice the Hebrew alphabet on days that I don't have Hebrew School."

"That's great stuff!" encouraged the Macabee. "You certainly seem to take pride in who you are and you work hard to show it!"

"Thanks," beamed Daniel, "Coming from a Macabee that worked real hard, that's a real compliment!" And before Daniel could say anything more, he disappeared, off of the mountain with a touch of his silver cap.



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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Chanukah is a time we celebrate the freedom we have to live the life we choose. As Jews, we have the Torah, and - as Americans - we have the freedom to follow the Torah. How would it feel if someone tried to take away this incredible gift of freedom (like the Greek Syrians tried to do to the Macabees)?

◆ We kindle a Menorah which represents the lightness and goodness we bring to the world. What kinds of things can we do to bring light to the world?