

# The Chanukah Story

From the diary of girl who lived 2,200 years ago,  
at the time of the Chanukah miracle

## Introductions...

Sunday, 3 Shevat

Dear Diary,

Lately, strange and confusing things have been happening around me and Mom suggested that I tell my story, as a way of organizing my thoughts.

So, here, dear diary, I begin...

My name is Tamar and I am 10 years old. I have a brother and two sisters, a mom and a dad. We live in Jerusalem, near the Temple. You used to be able to walk there, but now... now there's a big mess and most people don't go there any more. Why? I'll tell you more about that later.

Bye for now,

Tamar

**P.S.** Because I love to draw, sometimes, instead of writing, I'll draw things that I see or hear around me in the street or at home, or things that I imagine. This is me, writing.



## The Greeks in the Land of Israel

Thursday, 19 Adar

Dear Diary,

My parents told me that many years before they were born, the *Greeks* conquered the Land of Israel. They are still in control here. The *Greeks* brought their beliefs and customs with them to the Land of Israel.

Many Jews admire the *Greek* lifestyle. They go to the *Greek* theaters, read *Greek* books, dress like *Greeks*, call themselves by *Greek* names, etc. These Jews are called *mityavnim* or *Hellenizers*.

I understand that it's nice to get to know things that are new and different, but I think it's important to continue to keep Jewish customs and to feel Jewish.

For example, my best friend, Helena, used to be called Yael. When her family became *Hellenized*, Yael changed her name and, today, she dresses and looks just like a *Greek* girl. She even speaks *Greek*!

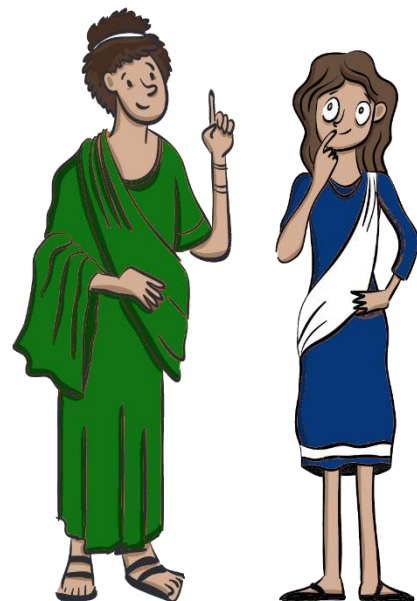
And if you think she's the only one, you're wrong. A similar thing has happened to more than a few of my friends.

Dear Diary, at least you won't change on me!

Yours always,

Tamar

**P.S.** Here's me with Yael ... whoops, I mean Helena. We're still friends and we have a lot to talk (and argue!) about.



## The King's Decrees

Tuesday, 22 Sivan

Dear Diary,

So, like I told you, we're not independent here in the Land of Israel. The *Greeks* are in charge and they make the laws. Three years ago, a new king came to power, Antiochus Ehipanes. Unfortunately for us, he's a very cruel king. He decided to forcefully impose Greek customs on everyone in his kingdom, even us, the Jews of the Land of Israel. He also made special decrees just for us and anyone who disobeys is punished.

According to these decrees, we're not allowed to keep certain mitzvot. We're not allowed to learn Torah or keep Shabbat and we're forced to bow down to Greek idols. What chutzpah!

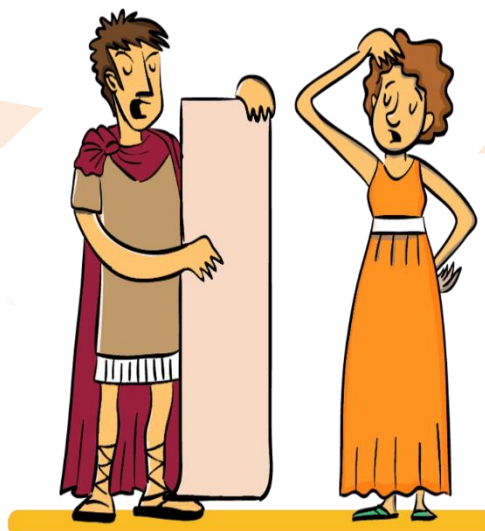
And another thing: The *Greeks* also took over the Temple, the holiest and most precious place! So annoying!

I don't understand. Why don't they let us continue to live according to our customs? Why are they forcing us to adopt their religion?

From me, feeling pretty hopeless, Tamar

**P.S.** I didn't actually see the king's proclamations in my neighborhood, but this is how I imagine the scene. I also drew my aunt saying what she always says when someone mentions the decrees.

- Jews must violate Shabbat and holidays.
- Jews cannot perform circumcisions.
- Jews must eat non-kosher foods.



He couldn't just say that Jews can't be Jews and leave it at that?

## Hope for Change

Friday, 10 Iyar

Dear Diary,

There's hope for change!

For years, we Jews have suffered from the Greeks, but, of course, we've been too scared to go against them. Their army is huge and very strong and they'd clearly beat us easily.

A few weeks ago, something changed. Messengers from King Antiochus arrived in the town of Modiin and demanded that Mattityahu the Hasmonean, an important man in that town, offer a sacrifice to a Greek god.

Mattityahu refused and he killed the royal messenger.

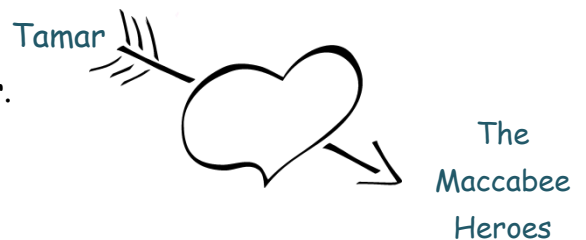
Right after that, Mattityahu and his sons escaped to the mountains, because they were afraid of what the Greeks might do to them, to get their revenge.

You know what? Thanks to that incident, many people realized that it's possible to stand up and oppose something that's not right. Many people have joined Mattityahu and his sons to fight against the Greeks. The Hasmonean revolt has begun!

I'm starting to believe that things will get better.

Yours,

Tamar



**P.S.** The Jewish warriors that Mattityahu the Hasmonean is leading are called Maccabees. Go Maccabees!

**P.P.S.** I don't draw fast enough to draw the Maccabees, who are always in motion... If only there was some tool or gadget that could draw a picture of them in an instant.



## The Maccabees Fight

Monday, 25 Kislev

Dear Diary,

War is awful. People are saying that the battles have been very fierce. King Antiochus's army has lots of soldiers and their equipment is much better than our soldiers' equipment. But our Maccabees aren't giving up and they're fighting very courageously!

Mattityahu died. He was very old and his son Judah is continuing to lead the revolt together with his brothers: Yonatan, Elazar, Shimon and Yochanan.

Oh, I almost forgot to tell you something important. The Maccabees won a very important battle and liberated our Temple from the Greeks. We are all thrilled!

That's it for now, I'm running to go celebrate!

Yours,

Tamar

Did you know that the Maccabees defeated the Greeks in many battles even though there were fewer of them?



Maccabee seems to be a name for winners. I guess that's why it was chosen as the name for an Israeli basketball team!

## What Was Discovered in the Temple?

Sunday, 4 Tevet

Dear Diary,

Miracles happen!

I told you that the Maccabees were able to liberate the Temple, but when they went inside, they were horrified. The Greeks had set up idols in our beautiful Temple and many of the precious vessels in the Temple were broken or gone. The Maccabees cleaned and purified the Temple, built a new altar and even made a new menorah to replace the one that the Greeks stole.

Some are saying that when they went to light the menorah with pure olive oil, as is the custom, the Maccabees discovered that the Greeks had defiled all of the containers of oil that were in the Temple! In the end, they managed to find one little jar of pure oil. The jar had enough oil for only one day but a miracle happened! The oil kept burning for another day and then another... It burned for eight days! In the meantime, new, pure oil arrived from the Galilee.

Unbelievable, right?!

I am so happy!

Yours,

Tamar

I wish a miracle like that would happen for me and I could keep eating this ice cream for 8 days instead of 8 minutes.



## Closing Things Up...

Thursday, 8 Tevet

Dear Diary,

There have been some changes around here recently.... The Temple has been repaired and the holy services there have started up again.

To express our joy and gratitude to God, there was an event called *Chanukat Ha-Bayit* (the dedication of the building) . Following that, a new holiday called Chanukah was declared, to commemorate our victory over the Greeks.



It's so fun — I love holidays! There's always something good to eat. I wonder what special foods we'll eat on this holiday.

To remember the miracle of the little jar of oil, it was decided that on this holiday we'll light a special menorah called a chanukiyah.

We'll put the chanukiyah by the door or by a window so that everyone can see it and be reminded of the miracle.

I hope that this holiday will be the beginning of more peaceful days for our nation.

Talk soon,

Tamar

