

## The Power of Small Miracles

Compared to the Hollywood Big Buster special effects and pyrotechnics of much of the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Maccabees is... perhaps more like a cheap B movie that's become a cult classic. In Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible), we get cities destroyed by fire and brimstone, split seas, pillars of fire, earthquakes, the sun standing still in the sky and people surviving being swallowed by whales or revived from death. In the Book of Maccabees? Well, not much really. And even the Talmudic attempt to emphasize the miracle of the menorah oil lasting eight days seems paltry by comparison. This is not exactly earth-shattering Divine intervention!

Yet, this is the miracle we proclaim to the world ('pirsumei nisa'). What is it about the Hanukkah miracle that is so compelling and enduring? Why is it so important for Jewish Law to codify that we place menorahs in our windows (or even outside our doors, as per the Shulchan Aruch, a medieval Code of Law)? Was the 'miracle' of the oil all that noteworthy?

Perhaps the answer lies in the world the Maccabees

the fire!) was a dynamic one for the Jewish People. New governments were formed, coins were minted. New ways of understanding Jewish learning and religion were developed (this period was the 'seeding' of the Rabbinic Revolution that gave us first the Mishnah and later the Talmud, including its cultures of dissent and debate). We can call to mind an image of the Maccabees cleaning up the defiled Temple. I'm sure they didn't have trash bags and Windex to polish everything to a sheen, but there's something ennobling about this image of Judaism being redeemed not through great miracles from on high, but through the miracles of dedication (which is what 'Hanukkah' literally means), community, volunteerism, connection, friendship and a common vision. Who swept aside the rubble? Who chased out the pigs? Who pulled down the statue of Zeus? Who polished the Menorah? Who scrubbed the altar? And who pressed the oil? All these are exactly the small miracles Hanukkah asks us to not only commemorate but also proclaim; the small miracles of an enduring, resilient, independent-minded, proud people, who wholeheartedly dared believe in the future despite