



MEET THE LATKES

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Grandpa Latke is telling the rest of the Latke family the story of Hanukkah – but he seems to be a little confused about some the details. Is it Mega Bees or Maccabees? Can someone please set Grandpa straight?

JEWISH CONCEPTS

The Latke family is confused: What is the holiday of Hanukkah (or Chanukah!) all about? While Grandpa Latke’s version of the story has outrageous “mega-bees” and alien “tater tyrants,” the real story of Hanukkah features its own superheroes and mega-miracles.

It all began with a small army of Jewish warriors called the Maccabees (“hammers” in Hebrew). They fought in the second century BCE in the land of Israel against the oppressive Syrian-Greek kingdom, which wanted the Jewish people to abandon their precious beliefs and way of life. In a thrilling tale of underdog pitted against mighty empire, the Maccabees defeated their enemy and reclaimed their beloved land and Holy Temple. After their victory, the Maccabees wanted to relight the golden menorah in the Temple, but only found enough pure oil to last for one day. They decided to light it anyway, and, miraculously, that small amount of oil lasted for eight days!

In commemoration of these miracles, many Jewish families light their own menorah on the eight nights of Hanukkah, eat festive foods made with oil, sing songs, and play games. It is a lively, joyful celebration of the deliverance of the Jewish people “in those days at this season,” as one prayer puts it. Latkes everywhere agree: Hanukkah is a pretty terrific holiday!

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Make Hanukkah Stamps

Is your household making latkes for Hanukkah? If so, chances are you have a few extra potatoes in the house. Grab a couple and make Hanukkah stamps. You can use the stamps to make holiday cards for friends or posters or banners to decorate your house, or to create homemade Hanukkah-themed wrapping paper.

Supplies

Raw potatoes (one potato = two stamps)

Paring knife

Nontoxic paints

Paint brushes

Cut the potatoes in half (the short way). Use the paring knife to first trace an image in the potato and then carve out the excess around it. (Parents can help with this part.) Make stars of David, dreidels, menorahs – whatever you like.

Brush the cut side of the potato with paint. Now press the painted side of the potato on the paper. Reapply paint to the potato before each stamping.

Happy Hanukkah (or Chanukah)!