

Fascinating Folks and Exciting Events

The Maccabean Revolt

When Antiochus Epiphanes sent out armed soldiers to force the Jewish people to sacrifice pigs, he made a big mistake. An old priest named Mattathias was outraged by this horrible sacrilege, so he killed the Syrian soldier and destroyed the pagan altar. With his five sons he fled to the hills. Many of the Jewish people who did not want to become “hellenized” (Greek in thought, culture, and religion) came to join him. When he died, his son Judah became the leader of the rebellion against the Seleucids of Syria. Judah was known as “Maccabee” which meant “the hammer.” The Maccabeans fought against the Syrians and were eventually able to retake the Temple. They destroyed the statue of Jupiter and cleansed the Temple from all of the pagan practices. An eight-day Feast of Dedication was held to celebrate a return to God and His ways—while their enemies were still trying to kill them—but the Jews found there was only enough sanctified oil to keep the holy lamps burning for one day. The miracle of Hanukkah was that the oil lasted for eight days. That is why Hanukkah is known as the Festival of Dedication and The Festival of Lights!

The Discovery of Buoyancy

Archimedes, a Greek mathematician, scientist, and inventor, suddenly understood buoyancy when he sat down in a tub of water. He was pondering a problem the king had asked him to solve. It seems that the king had given a craftsman some gold to make the king a crown.

When the crown was brought to the king, it weighed the same amount as the gold which the king had given. However, the king was convinced the man had cheated him. “Archimedes, you seem to be able to figure anything out. Can you help me know for sure if I have been cheated?”

Well, as Archimedes was considering how to determine if the crown was solid gold, he went to take a bath. As his body went down, the water sloshed up. This reaction showed him that when something enters the water, it “displaces” a certain amount of water. That’s what causes things to float, whether bars of soap or a steel ship. With this insight, Archimedes ran down the street yelling, “Eureka!” He experimented with the king’s crown by immersing it in a tub of water and measuring the amount of water which was displaced. He then put the amount of gold the king had given into the same tub of water, and measured the displacement again. Sure enough, the king was right! The displacement of the crown and the displacement of the gold were not the same. And that is the end, not only of the craftsman who cheated the king, but also of my story.