

THE CANDLES' REBELLION

An Original Play for Hanukkah

By

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## THE CANDLES' REBELLION

### Characters:

The Matzah (narrator)  
The Shamas candle  
First Candle  
Second Candle  
Third Candle  
Five other candles

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(As the play opens the audience sees a group of candles huddled together in one corner of the stage whispering angrily. From the other corner the Matzah emerges rubbing his/her eyes in the light and shaking himself to remove dust and crumbs. He catches sight of the audience, shows surprise and says:)

Matzah: Who's out there? Oh! It's you folks. Well, it's a long time since I saw you last Pesach and I'm only here now because of an accident. Someone must have left me in the pages of the Haggadah and I've been asleep (yawns), but I was woken up by some noises (looks around and sees candles and listens for a moment).....It's the Hanukkah candles! What are they going to say when they see a Matzah here at Hanukkah? I'd better keep out of the way, they seem so upset about something. (Moves silently away, as the candles begin to move forward.)

1st Candle: What a big drag, another Hanukkah to go through again.

2nd Candle: (tries to sound encouraging) But think of all the presents for the kids.

3rd Candle: I love presents! Hanukkah's neat!

1st Candle: Yeah, real neat! We candles get nothing but trouble. I tell you it isn't worth it.

Matzah: (creeps back stealthily to face the audience) Would you believe it! I hear the candles are going to hold a strike this year. Imagine, Hanukkah without candles...(goes away)

2nd Candle: (to 1st candle) You're right, Hanukkah has become nothing but a big burn.

3rd Candle: Who wants to get burned for no reason? Number 1, I'm beginning to think you've got a point. (Sadly) I guess Hanukkah's really not that neat.

1st Candle: I'm glad you candles are finally catching on. It's about time!

3rd Candle: (nervously) Candles, here comes the Shamas, what are we going to tell him?

1st Candle: (confidently) Well, here comes that big-shot, the Shamas.

Shamas: (Cheerful and business-like) Good evening everybody!

1st Candle: Good evening? Aren't you bored with lighting us up year after year?

Shamas: (continues as though Candle 1 had not spoken) Tonight is the big night. Aren't you all excited? (He checks them all out) Number 1, you'll be leading the way for us this year as usual, number 2, don't droop like that, number 3 you look a little pale?.....

1st Candle: You're giving me a headache Mr. Shamas.

2nd Candle: Me too. Why do we have to burn at all?

3rd Candle: What's the sense in just burning away? We should go on strike!

Shamas: What did you say? Did I hear you correctly? In a few hours it will be Hanukkah? We have a duty to perform. Hanukkah won't be Hanukkah without us. (Shamas shakes his head in despair) You younger generation!

1st Candle: We have a right to know why we are burning away every year.

3rd Candle: There's got to be more in it for us than seeing that all the kids get presents.

2nd Candle: That's it in a nutshell, number 3, there is nothing in it. There's no purpose to Hanukkah at all.

Shamas: Now, hold the phone! Have you forgotten our great hero of Hanukkah, Judah Maccabee? Have you forgotten his heroic deeds in ancient times?

3rd Candle: So what about ancient times?

1st Candle: We care about meaning for the present, for this evening. Who cares about Judah Maca-flee?

Shamas: It's Maccabee, Number 1, Judah Maccabee. You don't have to be disrespectful.

1st Candle: Mr. S. this is it for us, unless we get a good reason for all our efforts. Hanukkah has got to mean something for us today, or we're walking out on you for good.

2nd Candle: We stand by number 1 all the way.

3rd Candle: Let's go and tell the other candles. They have a right to know where we all stand.

7th Candle: (running on stage excitedly) Hey what's going on? What is the trouble?

2nd Candle: Come on Number 7. We'll tell you all about it! (They begin to walk away, but at the last moment the 1st candle turns around to the Shamas who is, by now, very disturbed.)

1st Candle: You don't have too long, Mr. S. It could be a pretty dark Hanukkah this year. (He does not wait for the Shamas to reply and they all disappear.)

Shamas: (desperately) Wait, wait..... it's no use. What am I going to tell them. I always thought they liked Judah Maccabee.

(Music begins to play softly as the Shamas looks helplessly around at the deserted room. The Matzah, who has heard everything, creeps out and stands by the Shamas, who doesn't see him at first. The Matzah turns towards the audience:)

Matzah: I'm not normally a busybody, but I would hate you all to have a Hanukkah without candles. There must be something that I can do. Maybe an outsider can help. Perhaps if I tell them about Passover it will help. Passover really represents many things; it's a big festival too and it goes back further than Hanukkah. Surely we can help each other.

(In a spurt of bravery the Matzah goes up to the Shamas, who is lost in thought, and tugs on his sleeve)

Shamas: Candle 1, is that you.....(looking at the Matzah) WHO are you? How did you get in here? You're not in style for this time of the year.

Matzah: Does it really make any difference how I got here? You look so worried. I hear your candles have gone on strike. I thought you'd like to talk things over with someone. After all even though I don't strictly belong to this holiday, I feel that we who have a part in the Jewish festivals should help each other if the need arises. And from what I can see, you need all the help you can get Mr. Shamas.

Shamas: Yeah, I sure could use some help. And you're right about the festivals sticking together to help each other out. I really don't know what to do any more. Hanukkah always went so well till this year. Now Judah Maccabee isn't enough for my candles. They want a reason for burning. What can I tell them? I don't suppose that you have problems like this at Passover?

(The 3 main candles start walking back to the Shamas. When they see him talking to the Matzah, they hold back in surprise and listen.)

Matzah: Well, all I can say is that on the night of the Seder all my friends, the shank-bone, the egg, the parsley....

Shamas: You mean the haroses and moror too?

Matzah: Yes, all of us, we join hands and rejoice that we are part of a celebration of freedom.

Shamas: That sounds worthwhile. Please tell me more. What kind of freedom are you talking about?

Matzah: Freedom from tyranny and oppression, and freedom to make the most of our lives. The way I look at it, you know, it's up to us to make meaning for ourselves. We have the history and tradition, but it is up to us to create and build the present and the future.

Shamas: I wish my candles could hear you. They'll never accept this from me, but how are they going to believe that I heard this from a Matzah?

(Meanwhile the candles have been very absorbed in what the Matzah has been saying. Candle 1 now leads the way forward and turns to the Shamas.)

1st Candle: (quietly) I think I see the point now.

Shamas: (surprised) What do you mean; have you been listening to all this?

- 2nd Candle: Yes, it's so much clearer now. We really do something at Hanukkah and we never saw it before.
- 3rd Candle: It had to take a Matzah to point it out to us!
- 2nd Candle: We light up our message for the whole world. What a thought.
- 1st Candle: From the tiny glow of the first candle on the first night of Hanukkah, until all eight of us shine in splendour on the eighth night, you can see through our light our increasing hope in man's ability to make something of himself, to bring happiness to himself and others.
- Shamas: Yes, Number 1, you have expressed the essence of Hanukkah for all of us I think. And don't forget Judah Maccabee; he is part of the tradition which encourages us to hope for our future.
- 1st Candle: I'll buy that. How else could we show our rising hope in man other than by one extra candle every night.
- 4th Candle: You mean that every Hanukkah candle counts? Even the new ones?
- 1st Candle: Of course.
- 5th Candle: We all mean something. (answering the fourth candle)
- 6th Candle: Hey this sounds beautiful. What do you think Number 7?
- 7th Candle: I'm with you. But what happens after I burn this Hanukkah? Can I light up again next year? You see this is my first Hanukkah.
- 8th Candle: Sure you can burn again next Hanukkah. What do you think all of the other candles have been doing each Hanukkah?
- 5th Candle: We don't really burn away.
- 8th Candle: Our wax and shape changes, but the light of our message never disappears.
- 1st Candle: It is our choice whether we will burn again next year.
- Shamas: O.K. Everyone, it's time to get moving.
- 2nd Candle: Come on Number 3 let's get ready for Hanukkah.

Shamas: (turns to Matzah to thank him, but the Matzah has disappeared.  
Music) How I wish we could have thanked the Matzah. I  
thought he would stay and see us light up.

1st Candle: Did the Matzah leave already?

(The Matzah comes shyly forward)

Matzah: I'm here. I just thought I would stand back and let you  
all do your thing. After all, I'm dressed in the wrong  
clothes for this time of the year!

(All the candles, including the Shamas, crowd around the  
Matzah and hug him, or share his hand. He then goes to  
one side and watches while the candles are lighted up, one  
by one, and the music is playing. When all the candles  
are lighted, they join hands. The Shamas stands in the  
middle in front of the candles and they sing the song. At  
the end of the first verse the Shamas holds out his hand  
to the Matzah, who runs up. They join hands, and the whole  
cast sings the second verse of the song.)

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#### LYRICS

(Words and Music by Rabbi Bernard Schachtel)

1st Verse: Each man,  
Each man must find the key  
To open his life,  
In finding purpose here,  
He kindles all of us  
At this season of the year.

2nd Verse: Our flames,  
Our flames are bright and gold,  
We understand their glow,  
They signify our quest  
In man's continued search  
For meaning on this earth.