

# Shield of the Maccabees

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# READING & ACTIVITY GUIDE

## About the Book

In this graphic novel, the story begins just before the very first Hanukkah . . .

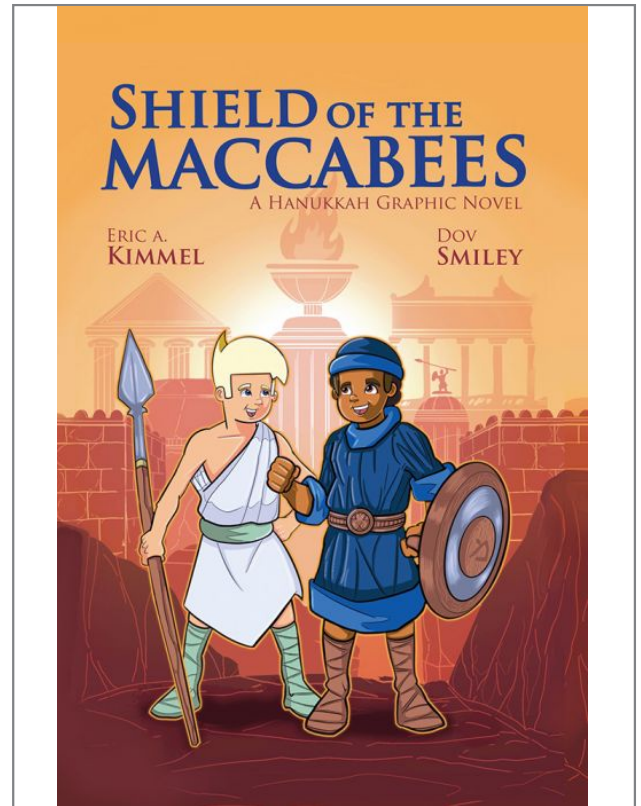
Greeks and Jews are living in an uneasy peace in ancient Judea. Jonathan, a Jewish boy, sees a Greek boy attacked by bullies, and stands up to defend him. They become best friends. But when war comes to their land, Jonathan joins the Maccabees while his friend joins the Greek army.

They seem destined to fight one another.

Can their friendship survive?

"A fun and clever twist on the story of the Maccabees. I wish comics like this had existed when I was in school."

--Steve Sheinkin, author, and illustrator of *The Adventures of Rabbi Harvey*



## Key Themes:

Friendship; Hanukkah; empathy; respect for differences; cooperation

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Ages 8-12 years

Use these questions to conclude a reading of this book with children.

Encourage them to share their observations as you read the book together, and take time to linger on pages or spreads that generate more discussion.

## After Reading

- Jason and Jonathan have a disagreement about whose country it is. Judea is part of a larger Greek empire. Does that make the Jewish people who live there Greeks? Are Greeks living in Judea Judeans (Jews)? What determines a person's nationality? Is it possible to be Greek AND Jewish?
- Jason and Jonathan's friendship is unusual. The two groups often don't get along. Why is that? How do Jason and Jonathan maintain their friendship despite their different backgrounds?
- The Greeks created one of the world's greatest civilizations. Why wouldn't Jews want to become Greeks?
- The Jewish religion is one of the world's great religions. Christianity and Islam developed from it. Why wouldn't Greeks want to become Jews?
- Master Apollonius, Jason and Jonathan's teacher, says his job is not to give answers but to ask questions. He says, "We will come to the truth if we ask the right questions." What does that mean? Have you ever had a teacher like that? Who was Socrates? What is "Socratic Method?"
- Antiochus's generals have little respect for him. They think his crazy policies will start a war. Yet they go along with them. Why? Are there other times in history where people who knew better followed a leader to disaster?
- Jason and Jonathan are both sickened by the violence and destruction around them. Yet they keep fighting. Why? The mercenaries tell Jason that war is a business. What does that mean? Are they right? What do you think?
- At the end of the story Jason leaves "to find his own place." What does that mean? Why can't he stay? Where will he go? Can you think of other examples where people left a country to "find their own place?" Perhaps they were forced to leave. How would you feel if that happened to you and your family? How would you feel if you saw it happening to your neighbors and friends?
- *Shield of the Maccabees* takes place 2,000 years ago. But similar conflicts are taking place today all over the world. Can you name some? What causes these conflicts? What are people fighting about? Is there any way such conflicts can be resolved peacefully? How could we go about it?
- Did reading *Shield of the Maccabees* give you any thoughts or ideas about solving problems that you may have faced or are facing? When is it right to compromise? When is it right to stand up for what you believe? How do you decide?