

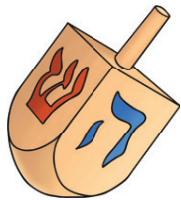
# Hanukkah

## What is Hanukkah?

Hanukkah is a Jewish celebration also known as The Festival of Lights and the Feast of Dedication. Hanukkah is a time when Jews remember how they won the war against the Greeks to practise their religion freely. Over 2000 years ago, the Greek ruler Antiochus forced the ancient Jews to abandon their religious practices and take up Greek ones in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, BC.



However, due to their commitment and loyalty, a group of Jews known as the Maccabees fought back and won, even though they were vastly outnumbered by the Greeks. The Maccabees managed to recapture the Holy temple in Jerusalem, which had been destroyed by the Greeks. Inside the temple, they found a single jar of oil to use to light their candle. Miraculously, the candle burned for eight days.



## How Do People Celebrate Hanukkah?

When Jewish students were banned from studying the Torah (the Jewish Holy book), they would secretly study it by pretending to play a gambling game with a dreidel. A dreidel is a cube-shaped dice which has Hebrew letters written on four sides meaning, 'A great miracle happened here'. Nowadays, a game of 'Dreidel' is played by spinning it and trying to win a pot of money or sweets.

In memory of the oil that burnt for eight days in the temple, it is tradition to eat oily foods at Hanukkah. This may be latkes, a type of potato pancake, or doughnuts cooked in oil. As many as 17.5 million doughnuts are eaten in Israel (the home of the Jews) at Hanukkah.

Another tradition of Hanukkah is to eat lots of dairy foods, in particular cheese. This is because during the battle between the Greeks and the Maccabees, a heroine named Judith managed to save her village from being attacked by soldiers. She fed their general, Holofernes, with lots of wine and cheese and distracting him. He got so drunk that Judith bravely took his sword and killed him, rescuing her village.

Traditionally, over the eight days of Hanukkah, families exchange gifts including books and games. Children are mostly given 'Hanukkah Gelt' which is the Jewish term for money. More recently, chocolate coins have become a popular option for children.

In remembrance of the oil that burnt for eight days in the temple, one candle of a menorah is lit every night during Hanukkah. There are nine candles in total as one is used to light the other candles, called the 'shamash', and this is usually done at sundown. It is a very important tradition and menorahs represent the light and hope of the Jewish people.



# Questions

1. What two other names is Hanukkah sometimes referred to as? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Festival of Food and Feast of Light
- ☐ Festival of Light and Feast of Dedication
- ☐ Festival of the Maccabees and Feast of Dedication
- ☐ Festival of Dedication and Feast of Doughnuts

2. Why was it surprising that the Maccabees defeated the Greeks?

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3. **Find** and **copy** one word which shows that the oil burning was out of the ordinary.

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4. What do the words on the side of a dreidel mean? Tick **one**.

- ☐ A great mystery happened here
- ☐ A magical miracle happened here
- ☐ A heroic miracle happened here
- ☐ A great miracle happened here

5. Explain in your own words why 17.5 million doughnuts are eaten in Israel at Hanukkah.

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6. What is a **shamash**? Tick **one**.

- ☐ a potato cake
- ☐ Jewish money
- ☐ a candle used to light other candles
- ☐ a spinner

7. Fill in the missing words.

This is because, during the battle between the Greeks and the Maccabees, a \_\_\_\_\_ named Judith managed to save her village from being attacked by soldiers by feeding their general, \_\_\_\_\_, with lots of wine and cheese and distracting him.

8. What edible treat are children often given at Hanukkah? Tick **one**.

- ☐ cakes
- ☐ lollipops
- ☐ toffee
- ☐ chocolate coins