

# Hanukkah

## What Is Hanukkah?

Hanukkah is a Jewish celebration and is also known as The Festival of Lights and the Feast of Dedication. It is a time of remembrance for when the Greek ruler Antiochus forced the ancient Jews to abandon their religious practices and take up Greek ones in the 2nd century, BC.

Due to their commitment and loyalty, the Jews fought back and won, even though they were vastly outnumbered by the Greeks. The Maccabees managed to recapture the Holy temple in Jerusalem and found only one jar of oil to light their menorah in the temple but it miraculously burned for 8 days.

Today, at Hanukkah, a Hanukkah menorah is burnt for 8 days by Jewish people to remember this miracle and the victory of the Jewish people. It is a very important tradition and you may notice that there are, in fact, 9 candles because the middle candle is the 'shamash', used to light the others. On each evening, one more candle is lit, along with a blessing. A total of 44 candles are burnt on each Hanukkah menorah throughout the whole festival.

## The Dreidel

When Jewish students were banned from studying the Torah, they would secretly study it and pretend to be playing a gambling game with the dreidel when questioned by the Greeks. A dreidel has Hebrew letters written on its 4 sides which mean '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.

## Hanukkah Food

In memory of the miracle oil, it is tradition to eat oily foods at Hanukkah. These can be latkes, a type of potato pancake, or doughnuts. As many as 17.5 million doughnuts are eaten in Israel at Hanukkah!

Eating dairy foods, especially cheese, is another tradition at Hanukkah. This is because, when the war was fought, a heroine named Judith managed to save her village from being attacked by soldiers by distracting the General Holofernes and feeding them with lots of wine and cheese. They got so drunk that Judith took one of their swords and beheaded him and rescued her village!

## Judaism

Hanukkah is actually quite a minor celebration for Jewish people and gift giving is not a tradition. Chocolate coins called gelt are given for children to enjoy.

There are bigger festivals in Judaism, such as Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Hanukkah is often mistaken to be the most important Jewish holiday because it is so close to Christmas.

# Hanukkah Questions

1. Who celebrates Hanukkah?

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2. What is Hanukkah also known as?

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3. What did Antiochus force Jewish people to do?

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4. Explain the miracle that is said to have happened in the Holy temple.

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5. Name the prizes you can win in a game of 'Dreidel'.

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6. What are latkes?

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7. What other foods are eaten during Hanukkah?

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# Hanukkah Answers

1. Who celebrates Hanukkah?

**Hanukkah is celebrated by Jewish people.**

2. What is Hanukkah also known as?

**Hanukkah is also known as the Festival of Lights, or the Feast of Dedication.**

3. What did Antiochus force Jewish people to do?

**He tried to force Jewish people to abandon their own religious practices.**

4. Explain the miracle that is said to have happened in the Holy temple?

**There was only a little bit of oil, but it managed to keep the menorah lit for 8 days!**

5. Name the prizes you can win in a game of 'Dreidel'.

**You could win money or sweets.**

6. What are latkes?

**Latkes are potato pancakes.**

7. What other foods are eaten during Hanukkah?

**Doughnuts and dairy foods are also eaten.**

# Hanukkah Questions

1. Who celebrates Hanukkah?

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2. What event do Jewish people remember at Hanukkah?

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3. Explain the miracle that is said to have happened in the Holy temple.

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4. Why did Jewish people first start playing the game 'Dreidel'?

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5. What foods are traditionally eaten at Hanukkah?

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6. Why are these foods eaten?

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7. Is Hanukkah the most important celebration for Jews?

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# Hanukkah Answers

1. Who celebrates Hanukkah?

**Hanukkah is celebrated by Jewish people.**

2. What event do Jewish people remember at Hanukkah?

**At Hanukkah, Jewish people remember the time when the Maccabee brothers fought against King Antiochus and won.**

3. Explain the miracle which is said to have happened in the Holy temple.

**There was only a little oil, but it managed to keep the menorah lit for 8 days!**

4. Why did Jewish people first start playing the game 'Dreidel'?

**Jewish students were banned from reading the Torah so they would study it while pretending to be playing a game instead.**

5. What foods are traditionally eaten at Hanukkah?

**Doughnuts, as well as dairy foods.**

6. Why are these foods eaten?

**Oily foods are eaten in memory of the miracle oil. Dairy foods are eaten to remind people of the story of Judith, who saved her village from being attacked by soldiers when she distracted them with cheese.**

7. Is Hanukkah the most important celebration for Jews?

**There are other festivals that are more important in Judaism than Hanukkah, such as Yom Kippur.**

# Hanukkah Questions

1. Who celebrates Hanukkah?

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2. Why do you think it is known as the Festival of Lights?

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3. What event do Jewish people remember at Hanukkah?

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4. Do you agree with what Antiochus did? Why?

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5. Explain the miracle that is said to have happened in the Holy temple.

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6. Why did Jewish people first start playing the game 'Dreidel'?

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7. Why do you think people still play Dreidel today?

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8. What is the significance of eating oily foods at Hanukkah?

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9. Do you agree with Judith's actions? Why?

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10. Can you predict what might have happened if nobody had fought against Antiochus?

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# Hanukkah Answers

1. Who celebrates Hanukkah?

**Hanukkah is celebrated by Jewish people.**

2. Why do you think it is known as the Festival of Lights?

**Light is a very important part of the story of Hanukkah. The light burned for 8 days, which was a miracle!**

3. What event do Jewish people remember at Hanukkah?

**At Hanukkah, Jewish people remember the time when the Maccabee brothers fought against King Antiochus and won.**

4. Do you agree with what Antiochus did? Why?

**Answers will vary but will most likely suggest that what King Antiochus did was wrong because he was trying to force other people to change their beliefs.**

5. Explain the miracle which is said to have happened at the Holy temple.

**There was only a little oil, but it managed to keep the menorah lit for 8 days!**

6. Why did Jewish people first start playing the game 'Dreidel'?

**Jewish students were banned from reading the Torah so they would study it while pretending to be playing a game instead.**

7. Why do you think people still play 'Dreidel' today?

**Answers will vary but will most likely include the fact that the game is fun, people like to win sweets or money, and the fact that the game is a tradition.**

8. What is the significance of eating oily foods at Hanukkah?

**Oily foods are eaten in memory of the miracle oil.**

9. Do you agree with Judith's actions? Why?

**Answers will vary but will most likely suggest that she did the right thing because she saved lots of people in her village from being hurt or killed.**

10. Can you predict what might have happened if nobody had fought against Antiochus?

**Answers will vary but will most likely suggest that Jewish people would have been forced to abandon their religious practices, which might have led to people keeping their religion a secret, or even not following their faith anymore.**