



# Judaism:

## Does celebrating Chanukah make Jewish children feel closer to G\_d?

### Topic Overview

- Chanukah is also spelled Hanukkah.
- It is an 8-day, 'festival of lights,' celebrated with a nightly menorah lighting, special prayers and fried foods.
- It is usually celebrated in December.
  - More than 2,000 years ago, the Jewish people fought against an enemy who would not allow them to practice their religious traditions. Their enemy destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, which contained many holy objects including a special lamp called the menorah. One small group of people, called the Maccabees, was led by a brave man named Judah. He led them in a fight against their enemies. Even though they were outnumbered, the Jewish people were brave and won the battle. When Judah returned to the Temple in Jerusalem the first thing he did was light the sacred lamp but there was almost no oil left - only enough for one day. The lamp was filled with this oil and lit. Instead of burning for only 1 day, it burned for 8 days. This is called the miracle of the oil and is where the 8 days of celebration comes from.
- Many families celebrate by giving each other gifts each night of the 8-day celebration.
- There are Jewish songs and hymns that are special for Chanukah.
- Jewish people enjoy special foods like potato pancakes, doughnuts stuffed with jam and fritters.
- The traditional food is fried in olive oil to represent the miracle of the burning oil lamp.
- Some Jewish people go to the synagogue to celebrate Chanukah. In the synagogue, there are special masses and readings. A special prayer is said to thank God.
- Psalms of praise are recited during the 8 days of Chanukah and the Torah is read every day.
- Synagogues will also light the menorah.

### Links with other religions

- **Jesus** (Christianity). Jesus was Jewish.
- **Christmas** (Christianity). Both are winter festivals, celebrated by retelling the story and giving gifts, special foods and customs, and remember God giving gifts to his people.
- **Diwali** (Hinduism). Diwali is another festival of lights that lasts for 5 days. Both festivals are celebrated with the lighting of candles (diyas/menorahs) and the giving of presents. They both celebrate the triumph of good over evil.

<u>Key Vocabulary</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Celebration	Anything that is planned or done in order to honour or remember something.
Menorah	A special candleholder with 9 candles.
Dreidel	A four sided top that children play with during Chanukah.
Hymns	A song or poem written in praise of G_d or a country.
Festival	A ceremony or celebration that repeats, often once a year, and involves special activities. A festival is held in honour of a special event, group, or person.

