



Hanukkah: About the Holiday



Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, is celebrated for eight nights. It remembers the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem more than 2,000 years ago. Families light the menorah, play dreidel, and enjoy foods fried in oil.

In 2026, Hanukkah begins at sundown on Friday, December 4, and ends at nightfall on Saturday, December 12. It begins on the eve of the 25th of the Hebrew month of Kislev.

- Hanukkah is an eight-day Jewish festival that begins on the eve of the 25th of Kislev.
- The Hebrew word Hanukkah means dedication.
- Hanukkah remembers the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem in the second century BCE.
- Judah the Maccabee led a small band of Jews against the Seleucid Greek king Antiochus IV.
- Jewish tradition teaches that one day's supply of pure oil burned for eight days.
- The Hanukkah menorah holds nine flames: eight lights plus the shamash, or helper candle.
- One more light is added each night until all eight are glowing on the last night.
- Menorahs are often placed in a window or doorway to share the light with others.
- The dreidel is a four-sided top with the Hebrew letters nun, gimmel, hei, and shin.
- The dreidel's letters stand for a Hebrew phrase meaning a great miracle happened there.
- Foods fried in oil, like potato latkes and jelly doughnuts called sufganiyot, are Hanukkah favorites.
- Children often receive Hanukkah gelt, which can be money or foil-wrapped chocolate coins.