

The Festival of Lights: Hanukkah

Learning objective: To understand the origins, traditions, and significance of Hanukkah within Judaism.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below. Use full sentences where appropriate.

Hanukkah, often called the Festival of Lights, is a joyous eight-day Jewish celebration. Ellie, our history-loving elephant, explains that it commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem over 2,000 years ago. According to the story, when the Jewish people returned to the Temple, they found only enough pure oil to light the sacred lamp for one day. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight full days, which is why Hanukkah is celebrated for that same amount of time.

Today, families mark the occasion by lighting the menorah, a special candle holder. Each night, one additional candle is lit until all eight are glowing brightly. Many families enjoy delicious foods fried in oil, such as potato latkes, to remember the miracle. Children often play with a four-sided spinning top called a dreidel and receive small gifts or chocolate coins known as gelt. It is a time for reflection, gratitude, and spending quality time with family. Much like the bright lights of the menorah, the festival encourages people to share kindness and hope with those around them, making the world a warmer place for everyone.

Word bank: Menorah · Dedications · Miracle · Traditions · Dreidel · Gelt

1. Why do Jewish families eat foods fried in oil during Hanukkah? (2 marks)

2. For how many days is the menorah lit, and what is the pattern of lighting the candles? (2 marks)

3. Why might the story of the oil lasting for eight days be considered a 'miracle'? (2 marks)

4. Based on the text, what does the lighting of the menorah symbolise beyond the historical event? (2 marks)

5. Do you think festivals like Hanukkah are important for families today? Explain why or why not using evidence from the text. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a bright, colourful menorah with eight candles lit, surrounded by symbols of the festival like a dreidel and some potato latkes.



Extension challenge: Research another winter festival that celebrates light and compare two ways it is similar to Hanukkah.