

The Festival of Lights: A Hanukkah Story

Learning objective: To understand the historical and symbolic significance of Hanukkah within the Jewish faith.

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions below. Use full sentences where appropriate to demonstrate your understanding.

Hanukkah, often called the Festival of Lights, is a significant eight-day Jewish celebration. Our friend Ellie the elephant loves learning about the history behind this festival. It commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem during the second century BCE. According to historical accounts, the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple, but they found only enough consecrated oil to light the sacred lamp for one single day. Miraculously, the small jar of oil lasted for eight full days, providing enough time to prepare a fresh supply. Today, Jewish families celebrate this event by lighting the menorah, a candelabrum that holds nine candles. Each night, one additional candle is lit, representing the growth of light and hope. Families enjoy traditional foods cooked in oil, such as latkes (potato pancakes) and doughnuts, to remind them of the oil that lasted so long. Children often play games with a spinning top called a dreidel, and families exchange small gifts or chocolate coins. It is a time for reflection, gratitude, and gathering with loved ones to share stories of resilience and faith.

Word bank: Menorah · Maccabees · miracle · dedication · tradition · dreidel

1. Identify two traditional foods mentioned in the text that are eaten during Hanukkah. (2 marks)

2. How many candles are on the menorah and why is one extra candle added? (2 marks)

3. Why do you think families choose to eat foods fried in oil during this festival? (3 marks)

4. Explain why the term 'rededication' is significant to the history of the Second Temple. (3 marks)

5. Do you think the 'miracle' of the oil is the most important part of the celebration? Justify your answer using evidence from the text. (4 marks)

Draw: Draw a beautifully decorated menorah placed near a window, with the glow of the candles lighting up a winter evening scene.



Extension challenge: Compare and contrast Hanukkah with another festival of light, such as Diwali. Create a Venn diagram to show the similarities and differences, and write a paragraph explaining which aspects of these festivals you find most inspiring and why.