

Hanukkah: The Festival of Lights with Max and Ellie

Learning objective: To understand the historical origins, key traditions, and symbolic significance of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah.

Use these flashcards to test your knowledge of Hanukkah. Read the front of the card, attempt to answer, and then reveal the answer on the right. Discuss the deeper meanings with a partner.

What is the primary historical event that Hanukkah commemorates?

The rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem after the victory of the Maccabees over the Seleucid Empire.

How many branches does a Hanukkiah have, and why is this number significant?

It has nine branches: eight to represent the days the oil lasted, and one 'shamash' (helper) candle used to light the others.

Explain the significance of 'oil' in the story of Hanukkah.

After the temple was reclaimed, there was only enough consecrated oil to light the lamp for one day, yet it miraculously burned for eight.

What is a 'dreidel' and how is it used during the festival?

It is a four-sided spinning top used in a traditional game; each side features a Hebrew letter representing the phrase 'A great miracle happened there'.

Define 'Gelt' in the context of Hanukkah celebrations.

Gelt refers to coins, often made of chocolate wrapped in gold or silver foil, given to children as a gift during the festival.

Compare and contrast the Menorah used in a synagogue with the Hanukkiah used at home.

The Menorah typically has seven branches and is an ancient symbol of Judaism, whereas the Hanukkiah has nine branches specifically for the Hanukkah celebration.

Why are foods fried in oil, such as latkes or doughnuts (sufganiyot), traditionally eaten?

These foods are eaten to symbolically celebrate the miracle of the oil that lasted for eight days.

What is the 'Shamash' candle and what is its specific duty?

The 'Shamash' is the helper candle. It is the first to be lit and is then used to kindle the other eight candles on the Hanukkiah.

The word 'Hanukkah' means 'dedication'. Why is this an appropriate name for the festival?

It refers to the rededication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem after it had been defiled.

Justify why light is such a central theme throughout the eight days of Hanukkah.

Light represents hope, faith, and the triumph of spiritual perseverance over darkness and oppression.