

The Festival of Lights: Understanding Hanukkah

Join Nova the Owl on a journey of discovery to illuminate the history and traditions of Hanukkah!

- Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem after the Maccabees' victory against the Seleucid Empire.
- According to the Talmud, there was only enough consecrated oil to light the Temple lamp for one day, yet it miraculously burned for eight full days.
- Families celebrate by lighting one additional candle on the Hanukkiah each night for eight nights, starting from the right and moving to the left.
- Traditional foods eaten during Hanukkah, such as potato latkes and doughnuts, are fried in oil to symbolise the miracle of the oil that lasted eight days.
- Children often play with a four-sided spinning top called a dreidel, which features Hebrew letters representing the phrase 'A great miracle happened there'.
- It is customary to exchange 'gelt', which are small chocolate coins wrapped in gold or silver foil, symbolising the currency used during that historical period.

Did you know? Did you know? The Hanukkiah is a special nine-branched candelabrum used during Hanukkah. Eight candles represent each night of the miracle, and the ninth, the 'Shamash' or 'helper' candle, is used to light all the others!

Key vocabulary: Menorah · Hanukkiah · Dreidel · Maccabees · Miracle · Gelt · Latkes