

CHANUKAH



The festival of *Chanukah* is celebrated for eight days in mid-winter. It remembers the story of Judah Maccabee and his followers, fighting the huge army of the Greek-Syrian King Antiochus, who would not allow the Jews to live a Jewish life.

After three years of war, the Maccabees surprisingly won the battle and took back the Jewish temple – a miracle. Before the temple could be used, it needed to be cleaned and repaired. The Jews wanted to relight the *menorah* – a large, eight-branched candlestick which was kept lit all the time, reminding the Jews of G-d being with them all the time.



They searched for the special oil to light the *menorah* but only one tiny jug was found. However, that oil burning kept burning for eight days – enough time for the Jews to bring more to the temple. A second miracle!

On Chanukah Jewish people light an eight-branched *chanukiah* to remember this story. A ninth candle is used to light the others, which is called the *shamash* (servant).

On the first night, one candle (or oil) is lit, on the second night two are lit, etc. The *chanukiah* is often displayed proudly in a window for all to see. In many families everyone lights their own *chanukiah*.



Traditional Chanukah food is anything that is cooked in oil ... Most popular are *latkes* (fried potato cakes) and doughnuts.

Traditionally Chanukah was a time of giving to charity, so parents gave their children a few coins as a festive gift, teaching them to give a little of that money to charity. Over time this has changed into gifts and eating chocolate money!

Many people also play the game of 'dreidel' – a four-sided spinning top with the Hebrew letters standing for the words '*nes gadol hayah sham*' – a great miracle happened there. You win or lose sweets or chocolate coins, depending on which letter it lands on!

