

## Hanukkah is a Celebration of Triumph and Renewal

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Hanukkah, the Jewish holiday, began at sundown on Friday, Dec. 11 and ended eight days later on Sat. Dec. 19. The religious celebration is also known as Chanukah, Hanukah, Hannuka and the Festival of Lights.

The holiday is an eight-day celebration that usually takes place between late November and late December. Those of the Jewish faith celebrate with eight nights of cheerfulness and religious spirituality. Hanukkah traditions include the lighting the menorah, exchanging gifts throughout the eight-day celebrations and enjoying treats cooked in oil.

The celebration is in honor of a great victory of the Jews over the Syrian-Greeks. That victory occurred In 165 BCE when the Hasmonean family of Mattathias the High Priest and Judah, his youngest son finally were successful in defeating the Syrian-Greeks and forcing them from Israel, which allowed them to restore their Temple.

That great victory revolves around the saga of Hannah and her sons. The family was loyal to HaShem, but the king demanded that they worship idols. In order to enforce his order, the king sent soldiers to take Hannah and her sons away. They brought them to the king's church where the soldiers proceeded to try and force Hannah and her sons to bow before Zeus.

When the family refused, the soldiers killed Hannah's oldest son. The remaining family still refused to obey and the soldiers killed them all.

For the next three years Judah the Maccabee led an uprising against the Syrians. However, the Syrian-Greeks had weapons and the Maccabees did not and were vastly outnumbered.

During the conflict, Judah's fighters hid in the Judean hills and attacked whenever they had the element of surprise. After the three years, the Syrian's, tired of the relentless Jews, left and Judah's warriors retook Jerusalem.

As told by the Talmud, once the Temple had been cleaned of Syrian-Greek idolatry, Jewish Priests were preparing to light the Temple menorah, only one vessel of sacred oil could be found. That vessel contained only enough oil to last one day. However, when the priests lit the menorah, it burned for eight days. It is because of that, the celebration is eight days long.

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