

# Jewish holy days paper essay

[History](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

What would Christmas be without the gifts, presents and all the lights? Some would say jokingly, that it would be Hanukkah.

I know that is what I would have said prior to studying some background on Judaism, and finding out some really interesting facts about the Jewish holiday Hanukkah. Prior to my research I had questions about the Jewish religion holiday, such as, what time of the year is the holiday is celebrated? What types of religious practices are associated with Hanukkah? Where did Hanukkah come from, what is its historical origin? How do the different branches of Judaism observe the holy day differently? I will answer all of these questions by exploring what is Hanukkah in this paper? The History of Hanukkah “ Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, is an early-winter festival full of joy. Often called the Feast of Lights, it is a welcome celebration during the growing gloom of winter” (Molloy, 2010 p.

327). Hanukkah is similar to Christmas in the time of year in which it is celebrated, which is late November early December. The difference of between the two is that instead of focoussing on only a one day celebration as Christmas does. Hanukkah spreads its celebration over an eight day period. The days the celebration begin and end varies each year in the Gregorian calendar. “ Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday, and as such, it follows the lunar calendar.

Hanukkah actually starts the same day every year; on the “ 25th day of Kislev” in the Jewish calendar” (www. answers. com). Hanukkah has many different religious practices associated with it. One religious practice associated with Hanukkah is the lighting of a single candle each of the eight

nights of Hanukkah. “ Each day, over an eight-day period, one more candle is lit on a nine-branched candelabrum-a special form of menorah-until, at the end of the festival, all are alight.

” This practice is called the Lighting the Hanukkah Menorah. During the eight nights each member of the family gathers around the candles before lighting and recites a blessing. There are three blessings associated with Hanukkah. Two traditional blessings are recited each night and the third is a blessing of joy traditionally recited during all Jewish festivals, it is only recited the first time the Hanukkah menorah is lit. “ Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us alive, and has preserved us, and enabled us to reach this time” (Katz, 2011). The lighting of the candles is used to commemorate the miracle of the Maccabees’ victory. The traditional story says that oil burned for over eight days and it should have only lasted one day. Another tradition associated with Hanukkah is the giving of a small gift each night from parents to their children.

This practice differs from Christmas gift giving by focussing more on knowledge of the tradition. Children are tested on history of Hanukkah, and if they could answer the questions correctly they would receive a gift as a reward. Typically the reward would be comprised of a token of money. The historical background of Hanukkah goes back to years before Christ 165 BC. During this time a minority community of Jews had victory of rededication of the Second Temple over the powerful Syrians forces of Antiochus IV after a period of desecration.

In 165 BC. the Syrians demanded the Jews to worship the Greek God and prohibited Jews to practise their rituals. In 168 BC the Jews Holy temple was seized and dedicated to Zeus. This enraged the Jews forcing them to fight back to restore dignity back to their sacred temple. “ The seeds for Jewish revolt were planted when Jews asked by a Greek officer to bow to an idol and eat a pig’s flesh, which is forbidden by the Jewish religion. This enraged one of the Jews who killed the officer and went into hiding with his family. There, he was joined by the rest of the Jews, who were willing to fight against the Greeks” (www.

iloveindia. com). After the victory over the the Syrian soldiers Maccabee held a big ceremony in the temple. Maccabees wanted to light the menorah in the temple, but there was only enough oil to last for one day.

The oil miraculously lasted for over eight days. This led to the tradition of lighting the menorah on Hanukkah.