

How other religions celebrate Christmas

The Jewish Festival of Lights

Chanukah, or Hanukkah, lasts for eight days, beginning the 25th of the Hebrew month Kislev (November-December). It celebrates the victory of Judah the Maccabee over the Syrian tyrant Antiochus over 2100 years ago.

In 165BC, after three years of war, Judah won a decisive victory over the Syrians and returned with his followers to Jerusalem to reclaimed the Temple. On their return, they could find only one small cruse of oil, enough to last one day. But when they lit the temple menorah with it, a miracle occurred and the menorah burned for eight days. Since then, the Jewish people celebrated the success of the Maccabees and the miracle of the oil.

Each night of the festival, the family gathers around the menorah, a special candelabrum that holds eight candles. On the first night the head of the family uses a helper candle – called a shamos – to light one candle. On the second night, two candles are lit, and so on, until all eight candles are lit on the eighth night. Each night, gifts are given. In some families, children play games with a small four-sided wooden top called at dreidel. On each side of the top is one letter of NGHS, or Nes Godol Hoyoh Shom, which means “A great miracle happened there.” Hanukkah means “dedication.”



The menorah is lit during Hanukkah

The Jewish Festival of Lights, **Hanukkah**, begins the 25th of Kislev (November – December)

Islam

Muslims around the world celebrate Ramadan, which marks the month the prophet Mohammed is believed to have had their holy book, the Koran, revealed to him by God. Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, being 11 to 12 days