

what is

# HANUKKAH?

QUICK FACTS FOR CHRISTIAN KIDS



Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade.

John 10:22-23

## The Feast of Dedication

Jesus and His disciples observed Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication. So what is it?

About 160 years before Jesus was born, Israel was under the rule of Syria. At that time, the Syrian King Antiochus set up idols in the Temple and did other terrible things to God's house in Jerusalem. The king also hurt Jews who remained loyal to God. A small group of Jews called the Maccabees organized a rebellion against King Antiochus -- and they won! The Maccabees cleaned out the Temple and restored it. Then they lit the candelabra, or *menorah*, to rededicate the

Temple to God. There was only enough oil to burn for one day, but because of the Jews' faithfulness, God provided a miracle: that little bit of oil kept the menorah lit for eight days until the new oil arrived. That is why Jews celebrate Hanukkah for eight days. Each night, one more candle is lit, to remember each miraculous day that the oil lasted. Because of this, traditional Hanukkah foods are cooked in oil; *latkes*, or potato pancakes, are a popular example.



## A Great Miracle Happened There

A dreidel is a four-sided top. Children play with dreidels during Hanukkah, along with chocolate coins called gelt. The four Hebrew letters on the dreidel stand for *nes gadol haya shahm*, which means, "a great miracle happened there." When the dreidel stops spinning, the letter facing up tells the player what to do. →



"nes" starts with the letter nun, which also stands for "nothing;" if your dreidel lands on nun, you do nothing.



"gadol" starts with the letter gimel, which also stands for "get;" if your dreidel lands on gimel, you take all of the gelt.



"haya" starts with the letter hay, which also stands for "half;" if your dreidel lands on hay, you take half of the gelt.



"shahm" starts with the letter shin, which also stands for "put;" if your dreidel lands on shin, you put one or two coins back.