

Is Hanukkah in the Bible?

In the month of December, when Christians are preparing to celebrate Christ's birth, the Jews are celebrating a festival called Hanukkah.

Hanukkah is not the Jewish equivalent of Christmas, although it starts on the 25th day of Kislev, the ninth month of the Hebrew calendar. Usually, Hanukkah starts in late November to mid-December.

In 2023, Hanukkah starts the evening of December 7 and ends on December 15. (The month of Kislev started November 14. The new moon was November 13 at 4:37 a.m.)

Hanukkah celebrates a time when a small band of faithful but poorly armed Jews, led by Judah the Maccabee, defeated one of the mightiest armies on earth, driving the Greeks from the land, reclaiming the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and rededicating it to the service of God.

Here's what happened. In the autumn of 164 B.C., Judah and his followers defeated King Antiochus and his troops, and were able to

capture the Temple in Jerusalem, which had been turned into a pagan shrine.

When the Maccabees returned to their ransacked temple, they found only one jar of oil—just enough to light the temple’s candles for one day. But according to the Talmud (one of Judaism’s holy texts), the oil miraculously burned for eight days—enough time for the victorious Maccabees to find more oil for their sacred candles.

At the heart of the festival is the nightly menorah (meaning “lamp”) lighting. The menorah holds nine flames, one of which is the shamash (“attendant”), which is used to kindle the other eight lights. On the first night, one flame is lit. Another candle is added from the right to the left every night after sunset, excluding Fridays, when the menorah is lit before the Shabbat candles.

Since the Hanukkah miracle involved oil, it is customary to eat foods fried in oil. The Eastern-European classic is the potato latke (pancake) garnished with applesauce or sour cream, and the reigning Israeli favorite is the jelly-filled sufganya (doughnut).

The miracle of Hanukkah took place during the 400 year period of time between the Old Testament books and the New Testament books—Malachi to Matthew—so it was not in the Law that God gave to Moses, like the 7 feasts: Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of First Fruits, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles.

Do we know if God had performed the miracle of Hanukkah or if it was simply a man-made feast? Yes, there is one verse in the Bible about Hanukkah. It says that Jesus attended the Feast of Dedication, and it was winter. That is the strongest possible endorsement that Hanukkah was God's miracle and it is appropriate to celebrate it.

John 10:22-25

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told

you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

Q & A from Last Week

Are the phases of the moon the same everywhere on the earth? Yes and no! The phases of the moon are the same wherever you are on earth, but they look different depending on whether you are in the northern hemisphere (north of the equator,) the southern hemisphere (south of the equator,) or at the equator. See the following chart.

**Northern Hemisphere
Left to right**



**Southern Hemisphere
Left to right**



New Moon is at the bottom
right-hand corner in each chart

Equator

