LEARNING | CHARITY | COMMUNITY

CHANUKAH 2025

What Is the Story of Chanukah?

Chanukah (a Hebrew word meaning "dedication") commemorates a pivotal moment of Jewish resilience, identity, and spiritual endurance. More than two millennia ago, under the rule of the Seleucid Empire, the Jewish people in Judea had their religious practices banned and their sacred traditions suppressed. The ruling power desecrated the Second Temple in Jerusalem, outlawing worship and threatening cultural survival.

In response, a small but resolute group known as the Maccabees rose up against the oppressors. After years of struggle, they succeeded in reclaiming Jerusalem and restoring the Temple. According to tradition, when they sought to relight the Temple's menorah, they found only a single sealed jar of consecrated oil, sufficient for just one day. Yet miraculously, this oil burned for eight days, long enough to press and purify more oil. This event is remembered as the miracle of Chanukah.

When is Chanukah celebrated?

Chanukah begins each year on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev. In 2025, the holiday will begin at sundown on Sunday 14th December, and will end at nightfall on Monday 22nd December.

How is Chanukah celebrated?

Often called the Festival of Lights, Chanukah celebrates both the ancient miracle of the oil and the enduring strength of Jewish faith, culture, and community.

Over the course of eight nights, families and communities light the chanukiah, adding one candle each evening until all eight lights plus the helper candle (the shamash), shine brightly. This growing light symbolizes hope, resilience, and the power of small acts to create lasting impact.

Chanukah is also a time for gathering and celebrating together. Families enjoy traditional foods fried in oil, such as crispy latkes and sweet sufganiyot, in honour of the oil that miraculously burned far longer than expected. Many people also play dreidel, exchange small gifts, and take time to connect with loved ones.

Through these traditions, Chanukah becomes not only a remembrance of history, but also a joyful reminder of community, courage, and the importance of keeping traditions alive.

How are we celebrating Chanukah at KS?

At school, we will be celebrating Chanukah with a series of exciting events taking place next week from Monday 15th to Friday 19th December.

Each morning will begin with the lighting of the Chanukiah in assembly. On Monday lunchtime, students can enjoy Chanukah-themed games. This will be followed by a doughnut sale at breaktime on Tuesday, with doughnuts available for £1 (cash only). On Wednesday, students are invited to join a Chanukah candle lighting in the main hall at 3pm. We will round off the week with our 'Gelt for Gelt' campaign on Thursday at breaktime, where students can exchange a 40p donation for a chocolate coin. Finally, you've heard of 'Elf on the Shelf' - next week we'll be running our own 'Shmelf the Hanukkah Elf' hide-and-seek game, with prizes to be won!

This week, we also organised a Chanukah toy drive, collecting toys to donate to Camp Simcha, Norwood, and the Queen's Hospital Paediatric Unit. Together, these activities reflect our commitment to celebrating Chanukah as a time of joy, community, and giving.