Chanukah this year runs from the evening of Friday 4 December to Saturday 12 December 2026. Our team of volunteers will be giving out Chanukah packs, with the religious essentials needed for the festival, to patients in hospitals and care homes throughout Chanukah.



Volunteers on their rounds on Chanukah at UCH hospital in London.

A Helping Hand covers the following in England for the Jewish Community:

Jewish Hospital Liaison

Cheer up Squad

Special Meals

Religious Essentials

Advice Hotline

Yad Ezra "A Helping Hand"

A non-profit organisation providing support to the sick, disabled and their families within the community

A Helping Hand
24 Fairholt Road, London N16 5HW
T: 020 8806 7999
E: info@aHelpingHand.org.uk
www.aHelpingHand.org.uk

Hotline for patients and families
0777 256 3441

Registered charity in England & Wales No: 297233

All About Chanukah

The Eight Day Festival of Lights

Friday 4 to Saturday 12 December 2026

יד עזרה
עזרה מיוחדת לנצרכים
Yad Ezra UK
A helping hand
with a smile

Information leaflet for NHS staff NHS

The Chanukah Story

Chanukah is a Jewish holiday celebrated for eight days and nights. It starts on the 25th of the Jewish month of Kislev.

In Hebrew, the word "Chanukah " means "dedication." The name reminds us that this holiday commemorates the re-dedication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem following the Jewish victory over the Syrian-Greeks in 165 B.C.E.



In 168 B.C.E. the Jewish Temple was seized by Syrian-Greek soldiers and dedicated to the worship of idols. This upset the Jewish people, but many were afraid to fight back for fear of reprisals. Then the Syrian-Greek emperor Antiochus made the observance of Judaism an offense punishable by death. He also ordered all Jews to worship Greek idols.

Jewish resistance began in the village of Modiin, near Jerusalem. Greek soldiers forcibly gathered the Jewish villagers and told them to bow down to an idol, then eat the flesh of a pig - both practices that are forbidden to Jews. A Greek officer ordered Mattathias, a High Priest who was a G-d fearing Jew, to acquiesce to their demands, but Mattathias refused.

Mattathias and his five sons went to the mountains, where other Jews wishing to fight against the Greeks joined them. Eventually they succeeded in retaking their land from the Greeks. These rebels became known as the Maccabees, or Hasmoneans.

Once the Maccabees had regained control they returned to the Temple in Jerusalem. By this time it had been spiritually defiled by being used for the worship of idols. Jewish troops were determined to purify the Temple by burning ritual oil in the Temple's menorah for eight days. But to their dismay, they discovered that there was only one day's worth of oil left in the Temple. They lit the menorah and Hashem Made a miracle that the small amount of oil lasted for eight days.

This is the miracle of the Chanukah oil that is celebrated every year when Jews light a special menorah. One candle is lit on the first night of Chanukah , two on the second, and so on, until eight candles are lit.

Significance of Chanukah

According to Jewish law, Chanukah is one of the most important Jewish holidays. Chanukah falls on the twenty-fifth day of the Jewish month of Kislev.

Chanukah Traditions

Every community has its unique Chanukah traditions, but there are some traditions that are almost universally practiced. They are: lighting the menorah, spinning the dreidel and eating fried foods.

Lighting the menorah: Every year it is customary to commemorate the miracle of the Chanukah oil by lighting candles on a menorah. The menorah is lit every night for eight nights.

Spinning the dreidel: A popular Chanukah game is spinning the dreidel, which is a four-sided top with Hebrew letters written on each side.



Eating fried foods: Because Chanukah celebrates the miracle of oil, it is traditional to eat fried foods such as latkes and doughnuts during the holiday. Latkes are pancakes made out of potatoes and onions, which are fried in oill, doughnuts are jelly-filled and fried and sometimes dusted with confectioners' sugar before eating.