

Hinduism/Sikhism: Why do Sikhs celebrate the birthday of a man born over 500 years ago? Does celebrating Hanukkah make Jewish people feel close to God?

Judaism: Hanukkah

Hanukkah is the festival of light and is celebrated during November or December.

A long time ago, Jewish people were told they could not celebrate their religion by a king named Antiochus. He told them to worship him.

A small group of Jews called the Maccabees fought against the king's army and won. During the war the holy temple was destroyed.

The Maccabees cleaned up the temple and to celebrate the victory they lit an oil lamp (a menorah).

There was only enough oil for one day but a miracle happened. The lamp stayed alight for 8 days.

Hanukkah celebration

Families give each other small presents on each of the eight nights of Hanukkah.

Each day the family lights one candle on the Hanukkiah to remember the miracle that happened all those years ago.

They play the dreidel game with raisins and sweets.

They eat delicious foods cooked in oil like doughnuts, pancakes and potato latkes. This helps them to remember the miracle.



Artefacts and symbols

Candle light	Shows that good beats evil and light beats dark.
Dreidel	A Jewish spinning top toy used at Hanukkah.
Nishan Sahib	A Sikh triangular flag which flies above the Gurdwara.
Menorah	An ancient lamp used in the ancient holy temple and by the Maccabees.
Hanukkiah	A menorah with nine-branch candles which is lit for each day of Hanukkah.

Sikhism: Guru Nanak

Guru Nanak lived about 500 years ago and was the founder of Sikhism.

When he grew up, Guru Nanak went to the river every day to meditate. He is believed to have attained enlightenment after taking a dip in the Kali Bein. Guru Nanak is said to have disappeared while bathing only to reappear three days later.

He gave up his wealth and shared all he had with the poor.

He had a vision of God and begun sharing God's message everywhere.

God made everything and loves everyone equally. God wants everyone to live in peace.

Guru Nanak's birthday celebration

In October/November, Sikhs celebrate his birthday.

Sikhs light fireworks and walk through the streets.

In the Gurdwara, the holy book is read aloud in full.

Candles are lit.

Some people have a day off work or school to celebrate.

Key Vocabulary

preach	Leading worship.
langar	A community kitchen that serves free food to anyone who needs it
gurdwara	A Sikh place of worship.
punjabi	A learner of Sikhism.

