



# Holiday Celebrations around the world

## Hanukkah

### *The Festival of Lights*

Starts on the 25th day of the Jewish Calendar month of Kislev and lasts for eight days and nights

**In 2007 Hanukkah begins at sundown on December 4.**

With blessings, games, and festive foods, Hanukkah celebrates the triumphs—both religious and military—of ancient Jewish heroes.

#### The Hanukkah Story

Nearly 2,200 years ago, the Greek-Syrian ruler Antiochus IV tried to force Greek culture upon peoples in his territory. Jews in Judea—now Israel—were forbidden their most important religious practices as well as study of the Torah. Although vastly outnumbered, religious Jews in the region took up arms to protect their community and their religion. Led by Mattathias the Hasmonean, and later his son Judah the Maccabee, the rebel armies became known as the Maccabees.

After three years of fighting, in the year 3597, or about 165 B.C.E., the Maccabees victoriously reclaimed the temple on Jerusalem's Mount Moriah. Next they prepared the temple for rededication—in Hebrew, Hanukkah means “dedication.” In the temple they found only enough purified oil to kindle the temple light for a single day. But miraculously, the light continued to burn for eight days.

