HANUKKAH

festival of light

The HANUKKAH *Christmas* CONNECTION

Hanukkah originated over 150 years before *Yeshua* (Jesus) was born. God's people, the Jewish people had fallen to hard times, a clear warning that their relationship with God was on the outs (see Dt. 28). Israel's enemies to the north attacked and took control of the Jewish state. The invaders made it illegal to worship the one true and living God. If any Jew was found studying or even obeying the laws of the Bible, he would be executed. Many Jews were even forced to worship idols. When the evil soldiers came to the town of the *Hashmonean* clan, now known as the *Maccabees*, to force this idolatry, the town's patriarch named *Mattathias* refused to offer sacrifice to the false god. A volunteer from the crowd, however, worked his way forward to offer sacrifice. In Holy indignation, *Mattathias* slew him.[1] *Mattathias* and his sons then killed the soldiers and fled to the mountains. From there they gathered together a brave company of men who decided it was time to reclaim their heritage and land.

The *Maccabees* realized that the sins of the nation of Israel had resulted in their conquest, so they earnestly sought God in repentant prayer. They sought the Lord, and the Lord was found of them. Though they were terribly outnumbered, they chose to fight against their conquerors. Backed by their faith in the Covenant God of Israel Who had promised through Moses that "five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword."[2] They fought and they won just as God said they would.

The small Judean army was victorious in battle after battle.[3] They even retook the beautiful Holy Temple. After evicting the pagans, they re-lit the *menorah* (candelabra) that stood in the Holy place, but to their horror most of the sacred oil had been destroyed. There was only enough to last for one day, and a new supply would take a week to prepare. In faith, the candles were lit, and preparations for more oil were made. Legend has it that the Menorah stayed lit for the rest of the week,[4] until more oil was available. Generation after generation of Jewish people, to this very day, light miniature *menorahs* on *Hanukkah* to celebrate and remember God's gift of deliverance.

It should be noted that the Temple was the most sacred place in the Jewish world. It was at the Temple where God promised to meet with the people and forgive them of their sins. Each and every day Jewish people would sacrifice sin offerings and countless other offerings at the Temple. In this sense *Hanukkah* honors two types of salvation: deliverance from oppressors and

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[1] See a similar incident, Numbers 25:7-8.
[2] Leviticus 26:8
[3] Read the Apocryphal books of Maccabees for the details.
[4] A total of 8 days and nights

the deliverance from sin pictured in the Temple service. The Temple was taken by the Syrians but rededicated one year later on the exact same date. That date was December 25th.

About 150 years later the Jewish people were again under foreign domination, but this time to Rome. Israel had again fallen into a spiritual malaise. They cried out for God to send them the promised deliverer, the Messiah.

Many of the Judeans (some of the ancestors of the *Maccabees*), believed that a humble carpenter named *Yeshua* might very well be the Messiah. They tried to make Him King at one time but He refused.[5] It wasn't until after His crucifixion and resurrection that His followers realized that He did provide deliverance. He didn't provide the Maccabeean style deliverance from Rome they had hoped for, but deliverance from an even more evil and powerful enemy, sin. In addition, *Yeshua* promised to return one day to deliver His people from their mortal enemies as well.[6]

Those of Jewish faith still await that promised return. In the meantime they still celebrate His birth -- which, as tradition holds, occurred on December 25th!

In short, it can be said that during both *Hanukkah* and Christmas, Jewa light lights and give gifts to remember and celebrate God's gift of salvation.

Here is the Hanukkah/Christmas connection. Both holidays credit God with providing salvation, and both holidays celebrate this salvation. *Hanukkah* celebrates God's salvation prior to Messiah's advent.

Hanukkah isn't only about physical salvation from mortal enemies. The main *Hanukkah* event is the rededication of the Temple.[7] The Temple is where God's plan of salvation was revealed and practiced before Messiah's coming. With Christmas we are introduced to *Yeshua* who fulfills what the sacrifices pictured. Therefore both holidays are legitimate for God-fearing people to honor. *Hanukkah* honors God for keeping His covenant promise to protect Israel. Had God not protected Israel, He wouldn't have been able to send us Israel's most cherished Son, Yeshua. Christmas celebrates the fulfillment of that promise and the coming of the Messiah.

This year, may Hanukkah and Christmas mean more to you than toys and pretty lights. May it recall God's gracious love and His gift to us.

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[5] John 6:15
[6] Rev. 19:11 ff
[7] Hanukkah means dedication and is mentioned one time in Scripture: John 10:22.

Observing **HANUKKAH** *in the Home*

1. Friends: Hanukkah is a family holiday and is all the more enjoyable when friends are invited over to eat potato latkes, play dreidel, watch Ben Hur or Fiddler on the Roof and enjoy the evening! But don't take it for granted that everyone knows the significance of the holiday, so tell the story!

2. Decorate: Decorations can include: Dreidels, Hanukkah gelt (gold coins made of chocolate) placed strategically about the home, banner (homemade or purchased), Israeli flags, menorahs, and other Judaica or Israeli memorabilia. Be creative and come up with your own ideas.

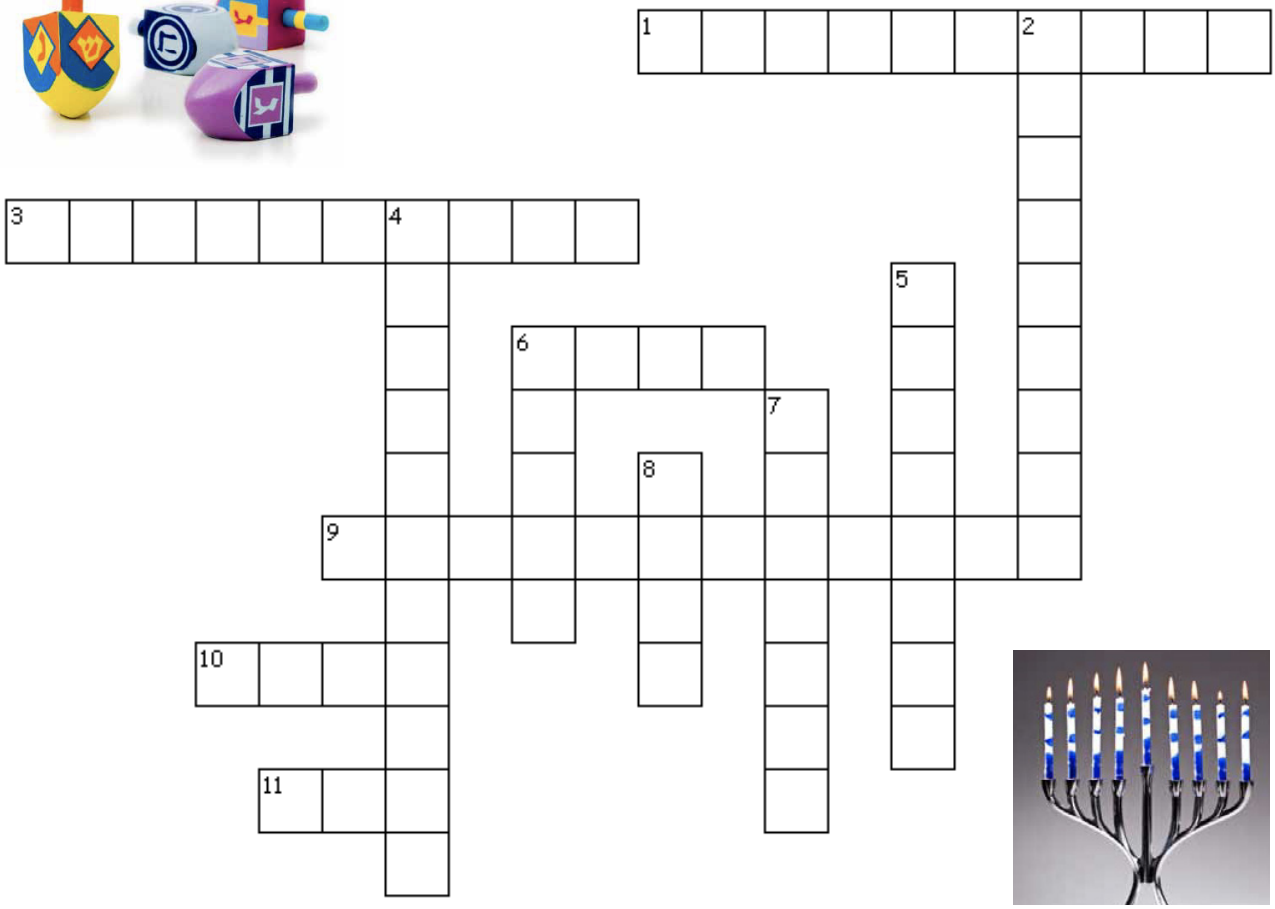
3. Music: There are many excellent tapes of Hanukkah music. You can also play traditional Jewish melodies either Yiddish or Hebrew. Klezmer music is best!

4. Foods: During Hanukkah, it is a tradition to eat foods cooked in oil as a reminder of the miracle of the oil. Any food fried in oil is acceptable, but Potato Latkes (pancakes) are a must!

5. Menorah: The Hanukkah Menorah (or more properly, Hanukiah) is an eight-branched candlestick. A purchased decorative Menorah is preferred; however, each family member may be encouraged to make his or her own using their creative ideas.

6. Dreidel: The Dreidel game is played by spinning a top called a dreidel. The four Hebrew letters נגהש stand for: "A great miracle happened there."

HANUKKAH *Word Puzzle Fun*

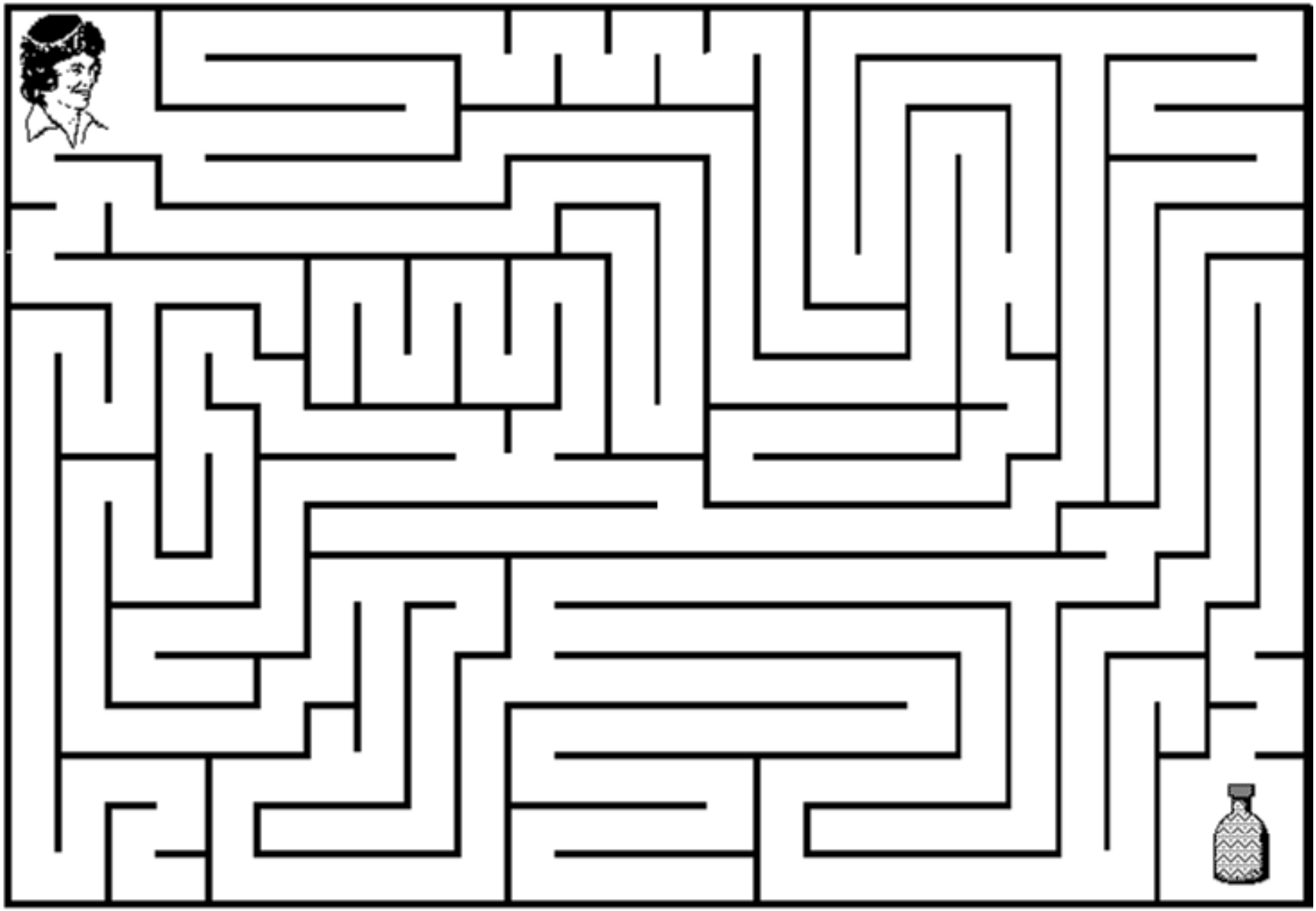


ACROSS

1. Reason God gave the Judeans victory
3. Name of priest who began the revolt
6. Only book of Bible that mentions Hanukkah
9. Best food to eat during Hanukkah
10. Number of candles on Hanukiah
11. Reason Judeans became overwhelmed by Syrians

DOWN

2. Syrian ruler who defiled the Temple
4. Proper name of the Maccabees
5. Name of menorah used during Hanukkah
6. Heroic leader of the Maccabees
7. Name of the servant candle
8. Number of Hebrew letters on a dreidel



Find the flask of oil

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HANUKKAH *Trivia*

1. Which of the following foods are traditional for the Hanukkah miracle:
   - A. Potatoes and apricot jam
   - B. Dairy and oil
   - C. Dairy and potatoes
   - D. Sour cream and applesauce

2. The most important Hanukkah observance is:
   - A. To play dreidel
   - B. To light the menorah
   - C. To eat traditional foods
   - D. To give gifts to family members and friends

3. The Hanukkah candles must burn:
   - A. Until the last member of the household has fallen asleep
   - B. From late afternoon until sunset.
   - C. 18 minutes
   - D. At least a half-hour after night has fallen

4. Hanukkah lasts for:
   - A. 8 nights and 8 days
   - B. 7 nlights and 8 days
   - C. 8 nights and 7 days
   - D. 8 nights and 9 days

5. Hanukkah commemorates:
   - A. The miraculous victory of the Maccabee rebels over the mighty Syrian-Greek army.
   - B. The miracle of a small cruse of oil burning for eight consecutive days
   - C. Both A and B

6. The 9th candle on the menorah (used to light the others) is called:
   - A. The shammash, which means “helper.”
   - B. The gadol, which means “Large.”
   - C. Ner hamaarvai, “westernmost light,” since it faces the west in the synagogue.

7. The Hanakkuh miracle took place:
   - A. During the era of the prophets.
   - B. In the generations prior to the exile in Egypt
   - C. In the second Talmudic epoch
   - D. During the Second Temple era.

8. The best type of oil to use for the menorah is:
   - A. Olive Oil
   - B. Ethanol
   - C. Organic avocado oil
   - D. Macadamia nut oil

HANUKKAH *Word Scramble*

Unscramble the following list of shuffled words to meaningful words!

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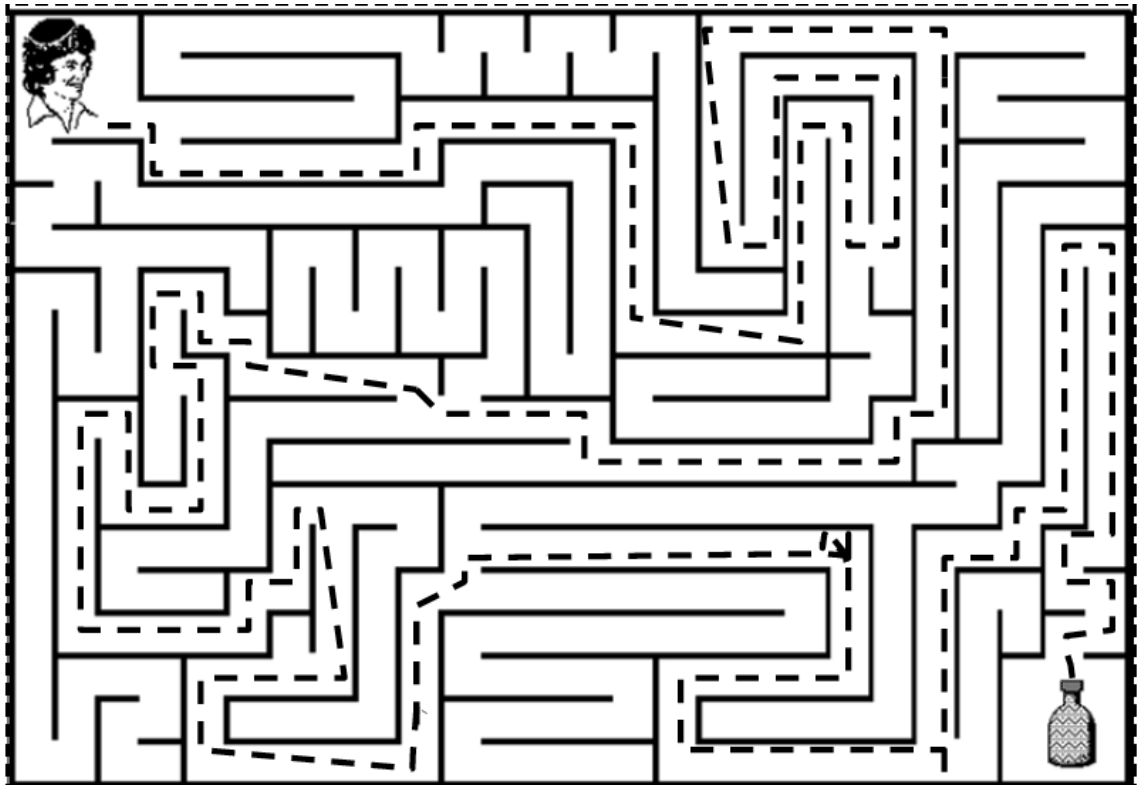
HANUKKAH *Word Search*

G J U O F S S M S T F I G E V I G
R I V W Z I H A U Q V S L Q M I C
E H F X K N W C L N T A U E G O H
R A T T J O L C F V V I I I V I J
E N E D O F N A T K A H F E C E I
V U M C F F M B O O L T N O I N N
I K P R H E D E M V S A I G A A N
L A L E S R C E S S N T H O E N R
E H E S C I I S L T N T C N N O S
D L I Q C N K S G I D A O O I E T
T A V L L G A O T A V M I V T U H
H V U L Q S D T Y M H E A R S A G
H A R O N E M S N S A S R D Y T I
Y E S H U A Z L A E H S B A B S L
P A N B W U B H F L P L I O N I U
S T H G I L T H G I L E G V W C I
L D P L M Y I C E L E B R A T E E

CELEBRATE
CHRISTMAS
COVENANT GOD
DELIVERER
EIGHT DAYS
GIFT OF DELIVERANCE
GIFTS
GIVE GIFTS
HANUKAH (alt. spelling)
HASHMONEAN
LIGHT LIGHTS
LIGHTS
MACCABEES
MATTATHIAS
MENORAH
MESSIAH
OIL
REPENTANCE
SALVATION
SAVIOR
SIN OFFERINGS
SYRIANS
TEMPLE
YESHUA

HANUKKAH *Word Search*



HANUKKAH *Solutions*

HANUKKAH *Word Puzzle Fun*

Across		**Down**	
1. Repentance	9. Potato *Latkes*	*2. Antiochus*	6. Judah
3. *Mattathias*	10. Nine	4. *Hashmoneans*	7. *Shammas*
6. John	11. Sins	5. *Hanukiah*	8. Four

HANUKKAH *Word Search*

G J U O F S S M S T F I G E V I G
R I V W Z I H A U Q V S L Q M I C
E H F X K N W C L N T A U E G O H
R A T T J O L C F V V I I L V I J
E N E D O F N A T K A H F E C E I
V U M C F F M B O O L T N O I N N
I K P R H E D E M V S A I G A A N
L A L E S R C E S S N T H O E N R
E H E S C I I S L T N T C N M O S
D L I Q C N K S G I D A O O I E T
T A V L L G A O T A V M I V T U H
H V U L Q S D T Y M H E A R S A G
H A R O N E M S N S A S R D Y T I
Y E S H U A Z L A E H S B A B S L
P A N B W U B H F L P L I O N I U
S T H G I L T H G I L E G V W C I
L D P L M Y I C E L E B R A T E E

HANUKKAH *Trivia*

Answers:

1. B
2. B
3. D
4. A
5. C
6. A
7. D
8. A

HANUKKAH *Word Scramble*

1. Candles
2. Gifts
3. Latke
4. Jewish
5. Oil
6. Star
7. Holiday
8. Menorah
9. December
10. Festival of Lights