

Hanukkah and Kwanzaa

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Hi, everyone! It's time for another English Extravaganza. For this English Extravaganza, I'm going to tell you about two holidays held in December that are popular in the U.S.: Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

Hanukkah (ハヌカー) is a Jewish (ユダヤ教の) festival, also known as the Festival of Lights, and lasts for eight days. Jews (ユダヤ人) celebrate Hanukkah to commemorate (記念する・祝う) the Miracle of the Oil. Over 2,000 years ago, the Jews rebelled (反抗した) against their Syrian ruler (シリアの支配者) because he insisted that they worship (崇拝する) different gods. After years of fighting, the Jews won and to celebrate, they rebuilt the Temple of Jerusalem (エルサレム). In the temple, they lit an oil lamp that needed to keep burning for the celebration. However, there was only enough oil for one night. A miracle happened! The oil lasted for eight days, just enough time for more oil to be made. This was the Miracle of the Oil.

Every year, Jews celebrate with the eight-day Festival of Lights by placing eight candles in a Menorah (メノラ), a special candlestick (燭台), and lighting one candle for each day. During Hanukkah, people exchange gifts and give to the poor and needy. They also play spin the dreidel (ドレイデル: 各面にヘブライ文字が記されている四角いこま), a game that uses a spinning top (こま) and candy.

Another December holiday in the U.S. is Kwanzaa (クワンザ). Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday established in 1966 to help African Americans remember and celebrate their heritage. The word "Kwanzaa" comes from Swahili (スワヒリ語) and means "first fruits". It is a seven-day event and each day is dedicated to (～に捧げられている) one of "The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa," which are unity (統一・調和), self-determination(自己決定), community, economic cooperation, purpose, creativity, and faith (信頼).

Like Hanukkah's Menorah, Kwanzaa has a special candlestick called the "kimara". A candle is lit for each day of the celebration and an ear of corn (さや付きのトウモロコシ) is placed next to it for each child in the family. Families decorate their homes with African crafts, using the colors red, green, and black. Gifts are given on the last day of Kwanzaa. Well, that's all for this time. I hope you all have a wonderful winter vacation. I'll see you next time and Happy Holidays!

