

Oy Vey, What Does Hanukkah Have to Do with Me?

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The holiday season is here, and while much fanfare is given to Christmas, many other holidays are worthy of our attention too! We are big believers in the idea that anyone, of any religion, can [live a DP Life](#), and that includes the way we celebrate holidays. When we take the time to explore each one, nurturing our interfaith awareness, we realize that many holidays uphold truths we all believe in. The more we engage in that idea, the more peaceful this world becomes.

In that spirit, here is what we can learn from different religions and cultures who bring joy and light into this dark, cold season:

Las Posadas (Hispanic Christianity)

December 16 – 24

This nine-day celebration (signifying the nine months of pregnancy) focuses on the arduous quest for shelter Jesus's parents endured before his birth. [Entire communities](#) recreate the procession from house to house, but with a twist... Rather than turning travelers away, each house welcomes them in, culminating in a celebration reminding the community of Matthew 25:40: "Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me."

The tradition of Las Posadas teaches us that nothing world-changing comes easily. We are all on a journey to create a better, more God-filled world, and when we choose to see God in all our traveling companions—even the ones who aren't like us—the more we can understand God's whole heart.

Hanukkah (Judaism)

December 12 – 20

This is one holiday that Jesus himself probably celebrated, honoring the 200 B.C. victory of the Macabees over their oppressors, the invading Seleucid (Syrian-Greek) Empire. While cleaning up and rededicating their sacred temple after it had been desecrated by the invaders, the Macabees realized there was only enough sanctified oil for a single night of burning. In this vulnerable moment, they lit the oil anyway as an offering to Jehovah, and miraculously, the oil continued to burn for eight days.

We learn from Hanukkah that when things look dark, a drop of hope can go a long way.

Bodhi Day (Buddhism)

Bodhi Day commemorates the day that the revered [Buddha](#) (also known as Shakyamuni or Siddhartha Gautama) experienced enlightenment (which some also call “Bodhi”). While accounts vary of how this enlightenment was reached, most versions agree that Buddha confronted his own human nature through meditation, triumphing over temptations and suffering to reach his deepest self. On this day, Buddhists celebrate with additional meditations and studying of the Dharma and the sharing of a traditional meal.

Bodhi Day reminds us that holidays are holy days first, and feasts second. Our modern tendency towards holidays is to relax and enjoy, but all too often the deeper meaning of the day gets lost. We can look to Buddhism in remembrance of why we have holidays at all.

Pancha Ganapati (Hinduism) **December 21 – 25**

Created as a Hindu alternative to December holidays, Pancha Ganapati honors Ganesha, the Hindu guardian of art and culture. During each day of celebration, whole families gather, dressed in a color specific to each day, to concentrate on sharing love and harmony toward one of five particular areas of life: to family members, neighbors and friends, the community and economy, to the world of art and culture, and finally, within all the world.

This Hindu celebration reminds us of what the holiday spirit is all about: love. When we come together as one family, actively choosing to send out love to one another in dynamic, creative ways, we generate the positivity and hope needed to move through the wintry bleakness of our imperfect world into a more fruitful tomorrow.

As the year’s end draws near, faiths around the world have their unique celebrations, but underneath all the festivities and rituals is the common human aspiration to love, honor and uphold all that is dear to us. What themes from these and other holidays will you try to incorporate into your own holiday celebrations? Share with us in the comments below, and have a joyous holiday season!