

Hanukkah: Commemoration of a miracle

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the town of Emmaus, which was significant since it opened the road to Jerusalem. Gaining possession of Jerusalem, the Maccabees began to cleanse and rededicate the temple which the Syrians had desecrated.

AFTER THE restoration, preparations were begun for the its rededication. But only one container of oil could be found to burn over the Ark. Miraculously the container lasted for eight days. This is the miracle of Hanukkah, the Hebrew word for dedication.

In commemoration of this miracle Hanukkah candles are lit in Jewish homes.

A candle is lit on the first night of the holiday, with an additional candle lit each successive night until, on the final evening, eight candles are burning.

In addition to the eight colorful candles on the menorah, the candelabra used during the holiday, there is a special candle called the shamas which is used to light all the other candles. It commands a special place on the menorah. It's placed on the side or in the middle of the menorah. Always, it is given the highest position on the menorah.

During the candle lighting, blessings are chanted. Songs follow. Special

prayers of praise and thanksgiving hymns are recited as part of each service during the eight days of Hanukkah.

IN SYMPATHY to Soviet Jews, special prayers are said on their behalf. Many homes keep an unlit menorah as a reminder of the Soviet Jews. The family lights a menorah of concern.

There are lighthearted moments during the celebration, too. Each night, gifts are given. Dreidel, a favorite game is played. The dreidel, a four-sided top, is spun. When it stops, the letter on top of the dreidel dictates the player's next move. The player will either contribute to the kitty, take the entire kitty, win half of it or pass. The kitty usually consists of nuts, candy or small amounts of change.

Four Hebrew letters printed on the dreidel are the initial letters of the Hebrew words, Nes, Gadol, Haya, Sham, which mean, "A great miracle happened here."

Among the special foods prepared for the celebration are latkes, potato pancakes.

Hanukkah isn't a celebration which belongs only in the home. There are parties, concerts and plays. Jewish community organizations arrange special events.



IN OAKLAND County, a children's party to celebrate and explain the holiday will be conducted at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 17, in the Farmington Community Center, Farmington Road near 10 Mile, Farmington Hills. Reservations are required. To reserve a place call the center at 477-8404. There is a fee of \$2 per

person or \$5 per family.

A recent addition to Hanukkah customs in Israel is the torch relay. A torch is lit in Modin, home of the Maccabees and is passed in relay until the final runner presents the torch to the president of the state of Israel. The relay is symbolic of modern Israel's own struggles.

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