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a Season of tradition

Lights are important in Hanukkah celebration

The lighting of candles is
a vital part of observing
this celebration of the
rededication of the
Temple of Jerusalem

By Carl Yeh

Freelance Reporter

“There are 7 major holidays [in the Jewish religion] and Hanukkah is not one of them,” said Micah Citrin, director of the Jewish Student Union.

Erin Rosenblatt, assistant director of the JSU, agreed. “It’s turned into a huge holiday because of Christmas, she said.

“Jewish holidays such as Rosh Hashanna and Yom Kippur are more significant.” Despite this, both Citrin, a senior majoring in history, and Rosenblatt, a sophomore majoring in psychology, agree that the holiday is a time for family and remembrance.

Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem. The rededication was made possible when Jews were able to drive the Syrian Greeks out of Israel in approximately 164 B.C., Citrin said.

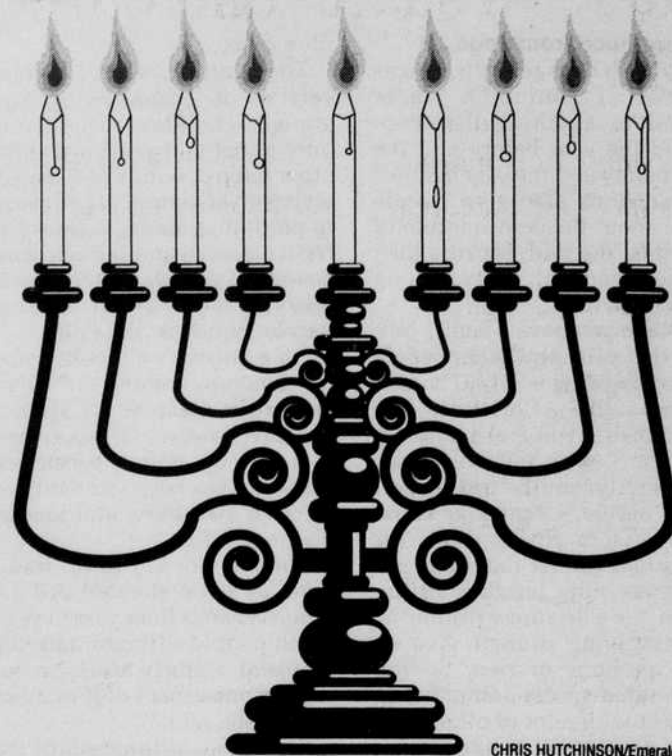
Furthermore, a small amount of oil found — enough for one day — miraculously burned in the Temple for eight full days until new oil could be obtained. Hanukkah is celebrated for each day the candle burned in the temple.

Lights are an important element in the celebration of Hanukkah.

According to a World Wide Web page, “the most important observance associated with Hanukkah is the kindling of the Hanukkah lights on the Menorah or Hanukkiya.”

Menorahs and Hanukkiyas are often confused by people, yet they are the best-known symbols of the Jewish faith and Hanukkah.

“Menorahs are a seven-branch candelabrum,” Citrin said.



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

“They were originally used just for lighting, but they became the symbol of Jewish faith.”

But Hanukkiyas are a nine-branch candelabrum, Rosenblatt said.

One branch of the Hanukkiya holds a “servant light” that is lit first and used to kindle the other lights for the duration of the holiday.

Both Citrin and Rosenblatt have celebrated Hanukkah personally by lighting candles on a Hanukkiya. In the past, Citrin has recited the blessings of the Menorah with each lighting. Rosenblatt’s family had a special Hanukkah dinner, and she received a gift for each day of the holiday.

Children can play a game called dreidel, a game of luck that has its roots in ancient India. A dreidel is a four-sided “top” with 4 Hebrew letters inscribed on each side. The letters are an acronym for the phrase “Ness Gadol Haya Sham” meaning “a great miracle took place there” referring to the day’s worth of oil lasting 8 days.

“It’s kind of like poker,” Citrin

said. “Everybody puts in candy or beans in the pot.” Which Hebrew letter appears on top when the dreidel stops spinning determines whether the player who spun gets to take some or all of the pot, get nothing, or make a contribution to the pot.

The JSU will be having a Hanukkah party Dec. 5 — the first night of Hanukkah.

“The party will include Israeli folk dancing and traditional foods associated with Hanukkah such as latkes (deep-fried potato cakes), sufganiyot (doughnuts), and gelt (chocolate “coins” wrapped in gold foil), as well as more familiar snack foods like chips and soda,” Citrin said.

Latkes and sufganiyot are significant foods for Hanukkah because of the oil they contain. “It all goes back to the oil thing,” Citrin said, referring to the “great miracle.”

The commemoration will be celebrated by Jews all over United States and the world.

“Everyone in Israel puts their Hanukkiya in their window, and everyone can see it,” Citrin said. “It’s very cool.”

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