

Hanukkah

Each year around mid-December, people of the Jewish faith celebrate the holiday of Hanukkah, which recalls a heroic victory and re-dedication of the temple in Jerusalem. A very special part of this celebration is the lighting of candles placed in a holder called a Menorah.

Over 2,000 years ago, Judah Maccabee led Jewish soldiers to victory over the Syrians. Hanukkah is the yearly festival which commemorates the purification of the temple. Today it also commemorates the heroic acts of Jews throughout all ages.

When it was time to rekindle the eternal light in the temple, Judah could find only enough oil for one day. But, according to tradition, a miracle occurred and the oil lasted for eight days. At the retelling of the story, one branch after another of the Menorah is lit each of the eight nights during Hanukkah to remember those important days.

It has been customary for families to give small gifts to their children on this holiday. Some families give their children one gift each evening of the Hanukkah and others give just one gift on the first evening.

Concept to be Taught:

Purification, or cleansing of the temple. We can also learn social skills like saying, "I'm sorry."

Extended Activity:

The most prominent game of the Hanukkah holiday is called a dreidle. A dreidle is a small four sided wooden or metal top that is spun by hand. Each side has a Hebrew letter on it. These letters mean none, all, half, give two. The game is played when each participant contributes "gelt" (candy, toys, treats, etc.) to the pot. The children spin the dreidle in turn. If it stops with "none" facing the child, the spinner gets nothing; "all," the spinner gets the whole pot; "half," spinner takes half the pot; and "give two," the spinner puts two things in. You can make a dreidle from two milk carton halves pushed together to form a cube. Place a short dowel rod into the top to spin.

