

Hanukkah celebration begins soon

by Ray Walker
Battalion reporter

First there was darkness, then there was light—that's the idea behind the Jewish Festival of Lights—known as Hanukkah.

An oil lamp that miraculously stayed lit for eight days in an ancient Jewish temple provides the basis for the eight-day celebration of Hanukkah.

The celebration, occurring in December, is often mistaken as being the Jewish equivalent to Christmas.

"Hanukkah is not a Jewish Christmas," Rabbi Peter Everett Tarlow said. "It is not even one of our biggest celebrations."

Hanukkah, meaning (fest of) "dedication," is a celebration of the rededication of the Jewish temple in the Seleucid kingdom (164 b.c.).

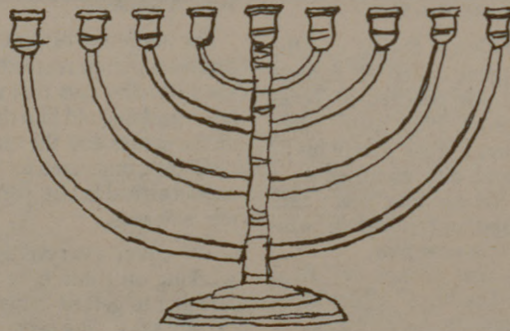
The Jews, who had remained faithful to their one God, were forced by the Greek Assyrians to abandon their religion and glorify Zeus. The Assyrians, who believed only those who followed their beliefs were their

equals, ransacked the Jewish temple and converted it into a fort.

Maccabee of the tribe of Judah, fighting for the right to be equal and for the right to be different, led a Jewish army and conquered the Assyrians. The temple then was rededicated.

Legends say that when the Jews entered the temple after winning the battle, they found the Ner Tamid still was lit. The Ner Tamid was an oil lamp that hung above the arc in which the holy scriptures were kept. It was used as an eternal flame representing God's truth. The Greeks had emptied out all but one small container of oil—only enough to last one day. If the flame had gone out, it would be symbolic of losing God's truth. The Jews began to make oil for the lamp knowing it would take them eight days. On the eighth day, the oil was ready and the flame was still burning.

"A little bit of light can cure a lot of darkness," Tarlow said. "Light symbolizing individual-



ity and national freedom, darkness symbolizing dictatorship and tyranny."

This year Hanukkah begins on Dec. 1 and will last through Dec. 8.

Each day during Hanukkah, one candle on the menorah, a candelabrum with nine branches, is lit. Eight of the candles symbolize the eight days and the ninth candle symbolizes God's truth.

"The big deal in Hanukkah is

lighting the candles," said Judi Vinderman, a Jewish medical student, said.

The eight days are centered around children.

The first night three prayers are taught to the children and two prayers are taught to them each day following.

"The entire Jewish religion is centered around educating the children," Keith Newman, a Jewish medical student, said. "That's why the Jewish people

have always been literate."

The children play a game called dreidel. It is a betting game played for candy or match sticks.

"Fried foods are usually prepared during Hanukkah," Tarlow said. "The oil symbolizes the oil in the lamp."

Latkes, a potato pancake, customarily are cooked during Hanukkah.

Throughout the eight days the children receive gifts.

"The gifts used to consist of candy and nuts," Tarlow said. "Now it has become commercialized and the children actually receive gifts."

Commercialization has hit Hanukkah much as it has hit Christmas. Santa Claus isn't part of the Christmas story. Likewise, Harry Hanukkah, similar to Santa, and the Hanukkah bush, the Jewish equivalent to a Christmas tree, are not the ideas of the Jewish faith.

"That's all Madison Avenue stuff," Newman said.

Dinners feature medieval theme

by Nicole Williams
Battalion reporter

Imagine yourself in Medieval England during the wintry December days leading up to Christmas.

The season is filled with parties celebrating this festive time of year, and you have been invited to a dinner at the manor neighboring yours.

You accept the invitation and come well-dressed, greeted by the doorman and introduced to

the other lords and ladies in attendance.

As you enter the long gallery, you are taunted by laughing jesters, amused by talented magicians and mimes, and entertained by strolling minstrels.

Soon dinner will be announced and guests will be seated for an evening of good food, good friends and good entertainment.

But wait, this is not the 15th century but the 20th century. And this is not Medieval Eng-

land but College Station, Texas.

Even at Texas A&M it is possible to get a hint of 15th century Europe preparing for Christmas. The MSC Madrigal Dinners provide just that.

Madrigal Dinner performances offer entertainment reminiscent of Renaissance Europe during Christmastide and have brought a little bit of medieval Christmas to Aggieland for three years.

Similar to a dinner theater, the performance is continuous

throughout the multi-course dinner. Minstrels, instrumentalists and jesters entertain the audience and try to get them to participate.

The program is named for the madrigals, who are the lords and ladies who sat at the head table and were entertained by the various performers during their holiday meals.

The audience is invited to participate during the evening by following the various customs typical of the time period. A favorite custom is placing the napkin over the shoulder instead of on the lap.

The evening is organized and produced by a 60-member committee made up of students and community residents. About 45 members make up the cast and the other 15 are crew members.

The committee is responsible for recruiting all of the performers, including minstrels, madrigals, jesters, jugglers, magicians and mimes.

The committee also is responsible for the costumes, all of which are custom-made. The costumes resemble clothing worn during that time period and are very expensive to make.

Annette Richardson, chairman of Madrigal Dinners, says some costumes are left from the previous two years, but they're expanding their collection because more people are joining the committee.

She says a lot of the people who participate are involved in the vocal music groups on campus.

Richardson, a member of the Women's Chorus, will perform as a minstrel. She says she became involved because of the unique cultural experience it offers.

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Instrumentalists will play flutes, piccolos, mandolins, violins, violas, recorders and lutes.

Besides the musical selections unfamiliar to most people, some classic Christmas selections such as "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" and "O Come All Ye Faithful" will be included.

At the end of the evening, cast, crew and audience all sing together Franz Gruber's famous "Silent Night."

The Madrigal Dinners will be in the MSC Ballroom Dec. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10.

Tickets are \$13.50 for students and \$16.50 for non-students and can be purchased at the MSC Box Office.

MSC Outdoor Recreation Committee

Equipment Rental (At the Grove)

| RENTAL PRICES | Weekend | Week | | | |
|------------------------|----------|---------|-------------------------------|------|-------|
| Tents: | | | Small | 1.50 | 3.75 |
| 5-6 Man | \$ 15.00 | \$37.50 | Lanterns | 4.00 | 10.00 |
| 4 Man | 10.00 | 25.00 | Ice Chests | 4.00 | 10.00 |
| 2 Man - Mountain Tents | 6.00 | 15.00 | Fuel Bottles w/ Fuel | 5.00 | 2.50 |
| 2 Man - Pup Tents | 5.00 | 12.50 | Ensolite Pads | 1.00 | 2.50 |
| Backpacks | 5.00 | 12.50 | Panchos | 1.00 | 2.50 |
| Sleeping Bags | 5.00 | 12.50 | Folding Saws | 1.00 | 2.50 |
| Boats: | | | Shovel and Pick | 1.00 | 2.50 |
| Canoes | 25.00 | 62.50 | Water Bottles | .50 | 1.25 |
| Kayaks | 20.00 | 50.00 | Utensil Sets | .50 | 1.25 |
| Stoves: | | | Sierra Cups | .50 | 1.25 |
| Backpacking | 3.00 | 8.00 | Compasses | 1.00 | 2.50 |
| Coleman 2 - burner | 4.00 | 10.00 | Pentax K1000 w/ 50 mm lens | 2.00 | 10.00 |
| Cook Kits: | | | Pentax K1000 w/ 50 and 135 mm | 3.00 | 10.00 |
| Large | 3.00 | 7.50 | | | |



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