

A Look at Chanukah, an Unfortunately Underrepresented Holiday

As a kid I was more fortunate than most around the holidays, due to the fact that I got to celebrate both Christmas and Chanukah. Chanukah, or Hanukkah, or Hanukah or whatever other way you choose to spell it, is commonly known as the Festival of Lights and is one of the most famous of the Jewish holidays alongside Passover. Yet for some reason, it has been grossly underrepresented in the media compared to Passover, which has had several movies that have been made about it, the most recent being Exodus: Gods and Kings.

This is especially puzzling considering the story of Chanukah takes place immediately following one of Hollywood's favorite things to make movies about, i.e. war and revolt, but I digress. Most people I think know the rest, but for those who don't... basically after the revolt against the occupiers of the region succeeded, a menorah was to be lit each night however there was only enough oil to last for one. Miraculously the oil lasted eight days, long enough for new oil to be made, and so the holiday was born.



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As with every holiday people celebrate in their own different ways. In my family the kids get some gelt or chocolate coins, we light a candle on our menorah each night and occasionally we'll have latkes or fried potato pancakes. Of course, when I was younger I would get dreidels, little spinning tops with Hebrew symbols on them, and I would listen to Adam Sandler's "Chanukah Song" which is one of the only options other than singing "Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel".

Doing this every year made me feel special, different from the other kids but in a good way like I had won some kind of lottery and gotten a prize to boast about. It was only later in my teenage years that I began to appreciate more the solemnity and tradition of the holiday when my family visited Temple Beth-El in Fall River. On the outside, it was a dull gray and rather unappealing building, but inside its main ceremonial hall, it was as ornate and wondrous as you'd expect from a place of worship. I didn't spend much time there and eventually, my interest faded away with my visits there, but I still look back on the short time I spent there fondly.

While I've always liked Chanukah well enough, I've never really loved it in the same way I do with other holidays like Thanksgiving or Christmas. Even though nowadays Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday I used to love Christmas and all that entailed. Spending Christmas Eve with my mother's side of the family, the special sugar-frosted fried pancakes I would eat in the morning, and of course the rush of tearing open every present under the tree. Now though, as much as I try to recapture that feeling of excitement and pure unfiltered joy I just can't. Sure there are good moments, and of course, I'm always happy, but it just doesn't feel the same.

Outside of myself though there's also been an argument stirring around this time of year about decorations and specifically if towns and cities should keep Christmas decorations off of public lands. I can certainly relate to people who may feel left out and alienated and would encourage

any local governments setting up displays to try to include and represent every one of all races and religions, but at the same time I know that isn't fully possible. Personally I enjoy seeing the decorations and have never thought much about their religious aspect when looking at them. I just marvel at the shiny lights and admire the dedication and effort it takes to try and make a place look good for the holidays, to try and make people smile. And honestly, how can you hate something that was meant to spread messages of goodwill, hope, and peace?

If you don't like it, ignore it, or ask your local representatives to have something put up to represent your religion, but don't resort to forcing someone to abide by your beliefs through something like a lawsuit. With that said remember to enjoy the holiday season, and don't leave gift buying until the last minute.
