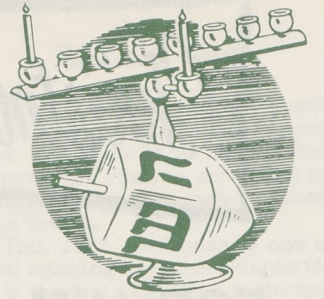


Chanukah

FEAST OF THE CANDLES



Chanukah, the Jewish "Festival of Lights" holiday, will begin at Sundown, Saturday, December 18. Like many Jewish holidays, Chanukah has a clear cut historical and political origin. The actual event which it commemorates, the Hebrew struggle for religious freedom from the tyrannical regime of the Greco-Syrian emperor Antiochus Epephanas, are known to have actually occurred in 165 BCE.

For the Jewish people, Chanukah symbolizes the victory of a spiritual ideal over military and political despotism. A handful of Jews, determined to preserve their faith and their culture, openly defied the overwhelming power of the Syrian king, Antiochus, who was determined to suppress Jewish monotheism and its proper observance.

When in the year 168 BCE, Antiochus ordered that the Temple in Jerusalem be used for pagan practices and that sacrifices be offered there to the Greek god Zeus Olympus, the Jews, under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus (also known as Judah the Hasmonean) rebelled and achieved military victories which culminated in the reconquering of Jerusalem, the expulsion of the Syrians, and the purification of the Temple.



Chanukah is a season of special joy for children. This poem, written by Scott Saffian for the Post a few years ago, expresses a child's delight in the holiday.



Chanukah Chanukah, the festival of lights.
Chanukah Chanukah, with such delight.
Chanukah Chanukah, from days of old.
Chanukah Chanukah, when no one is bold.

According to the legend, all the oil for the holy lamps of the Temple had been defiled by pagan worshippers. Only one untouched cruse of oil was found, sealed and hidden away. The oil, which was enough to last only for one day, lasted miraculously for eight days. Chanukah is celebrated by Jews everywhere by lighting candles every night of the holiday, beginning with one the first night, two the second, etc., until finally on the eighth night eight candles blaze in the Chanukah menorah, or candelabrum. This progression is also a symbol of Judaism's belief in the gradual, constant increase of intellectual light and the slow, steady victory of spiritual enlightenment over darkness.

The holiday is observed with special services, prayers and hymns in synagogues, homes and religious schools. It is a holiday of particular gaiety for children; games are played, a special Chanukah top called a "dreidel!" is spun, and traditionally children receive presents of Chanukah "gelt" (coins or money). Special pancakes called "latkes" are traditional food for this holiday.

The Hebrew word "Chanukah" means "rededication," and the holiday is also known as "The Days of Rededication." During these eight days, Jews throughout the world remember their ancient struggle for freedom and rededicate themselves to the ideal of freedom for all men.



"Rock of Ages" is the hymn sung in the synagogues during the Chanukah observance.



Rock of Ages, let our song
Praise Thy saving power;
Thou amidst the raging foe,
Wast our sheltering tower.
Furious, they assailed us,
But Thine arm availed us,
And Thy Word
Broke their sword
When our own strength failed us.

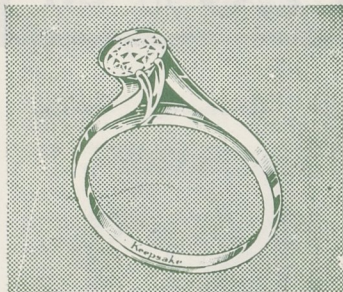
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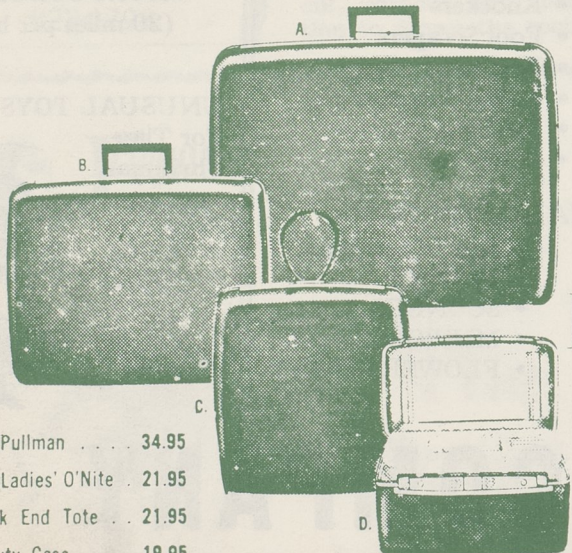


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