



HAPPY
HANUKKAH

iNTERFAITH iNSIDER

SAIT Interfaith Centre Monthly Newsletter.

History & Symbolism of Menorahs

The history and intricate symbols of the Jewish menorah are truly fascinating. In fact, the menorah is the oldest known religious symbol on record. In Exodus, the second book of the Torah, God gives instructions to Moses for Aaron the Priest to hammer out the 7 arm candelabra out of one piece of gold with specific and elaborate designs on the shaft and each of the six arms. This original menorah is said to have been 1.62m tall and weighed approximately 45kg. Its fashioning from a single piece of gold symbolizes the unity of G-d's people. The decorative almond flower blossoms symbolize life and purity. 7 lamps to remember the days of creation and lit everyday, with the centre lamp remaining lit, except for necessary cleaning, to symbolize G-d's eternal light.

During the season of Hanukkah, there is another menorah that appears but it has 9 candles. The story behind Hanukkah has to do with the Greek destruction of the holy Temple in Jerusalem during the Maccabean Revolt in the year 168 BCE. When Judah Maccabee and his army finally won the war, they went back to the Temple to pray only to discover it had been destroyed and all the Kosher oil desecrated except for one jar, enough to burn in the menorah for only one day. The next day, to their surprise, it was still burning and continued to miraculously burn for the eight days straight! The ritual to cleanse oneself after battle takes 7 days. Therefore, no one would be able to begin the full day process of making the Kosher oil until the day eight!

What an absolute miracle it was! This is why the celebration of Hanukkah is not only to commemorate the Maccabean victory, but really to praise G-d for His enduring faithfulness and His eternal presence.

The Temple menorah is still lit daily but Jewish families also have a Hanukkah menorah or "Chenukiah" at home that is displayed in a window for all to see during Hanukkah. Hanukkah this year will be celebrated Dec 18 - 26. Happy Hanukkah!



Representation of the Prophet Zachariah's vision of a menorah between two olive trees, by Joseph Ha-Zarefati in the Cervera Bible, c.1300. Bridgeman Images.

December Events

Candy Cane Christmas Concert

Dec 7 @ 11am-1pm

Visit the Stan Grad Centre for hot chocolate and a live violin performance of some holiday favorites.

Brought to you by the Office of Student Engagement and Palladio Music.



Interfaith Year End Board Game Party

Dec 9 @ 1-5pm, MB305

Join us for a fun afternoon of board games, hot chocolate and goodies to celebrate the end of the semester.

Interfaith Interface

A safe, inclusive and inspiring activity where students come together to engage in thought-provoking dialogue.

Fridays 10am in MB305:

Dec 2 - Santa vs St. Nicholas

Dec 9 - What is Kwanzaa?



My First Christmas in Canada!

by Jinky Potencioso

Christmas is an annual Christian religious holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. It is also the time that reminds all of us about the importance of sharing and giving gifts to our family and friends. This special holiday is celebrated by people across the world.

I was born and raised in the Philippines, where more than 86% of the population are Christians. Filipinos are known to have the longest celebration of Christmas season. It will start as early as September and ends in December. Yes, the joy and the spirit of Christmas will be celebrated for four months long! Expect a massive family gathering, Christmas parties, exchanging gifts and kids Christmas caroling around the houses and of course the delightful food! We also have Misa de Gallo known as Simbang Gabi a 4 to 5 am series of mass celebrated during the nine days leading to Christmas. It is truly fun, loud, and exciting for everyone! When my family and I moved to Canada, everything changed.

Since Canada is a huge and diverse country people have various cultural backgrounds and because of this there are several Christmas traditions. For many Canadians, it seems, it is more of a secular celebration, with a focus on Santa Claus, Christmas trees, gift giving and family rather than about Jesus.

I was very excited to finally experience a

white Christmas! Unfortunately, it was not the way that I expected. First thing is the freezing weather! You really don't want to go out and take a picture outside. But the kids really wanted to build their first snow man, so I had no choice! Another thing is the silence around the neighborhood. Yes, everything around is white like the winter wonderland I imagined, but I feel there is something missing. Was it the kids house to house Christmas caroling? Or the outdoor Christmas games and parties? Or is it the loudness of people's laughter reuniting with friends and family? I certainly cannot tell what it is, but it is really quiet like an ordinary day. I did not even notice that it was almost Christmas.

On Christmas eve we had all the gifts underneath the Christmas tree and a roasted turkey on our table. After the fancy dinner and opening of gifts we let the kids sleep, and others went to work. I must say, it was one of my terrible Christmas experiences. But still, there's a lot of things to be thankful for. So, despite of feeling awful, I was still grateful for having my family around me and we experience together our first Christmas in Canada.

Different beliefs and traditions can certainly affect all our emotions and expectations. Maybe it feels awful for me because Canada Christmas is way too different than in my tradition. The thing is no matter what faith and tradition we are practicing, Christmas is a holiday and a time for family, for generosity and gratefulness to all the blessings we have.

Advance Merry Christmas to all and may we all have a prosperous new year!

