

Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel ...

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Tonight, Jews across the South Valley will light the first candle in their menorahs in celebration of the first of the eight nights of Hanukkah. Many may dine on traditional Hanukkah foods such as potato latkes, similar to potato pancakes, served with sour cream and apple sauce, and jelly doughnuts called "sufganiyot."

Along with the prayers of the holiday, Jews will recount the story of Hanukkah, when the Maccabees finally defeated the Syrians to take back the holy temple in Jerusalem. The eternal light, which must always be in the temple, only had one day's worth of purified oil left to fuel the flame. As people worked to make more purified oil, a process that took eight days, the oil under the flame miraculously held out, said Mel Weisblatt, a member of Congregation Emeth, the South Valley's Jewish congregation.

"That's why Hanukkah is eight days, and the candles are symbolic of the flame that stayed lit until the new oil was ready," he explained. "More traditional menorahs will even have small oil reservoirs instead of just being candle holders."

Aside from lighting the candles on the menorah and eating traditional foods, playing a game of dreidel is also a favorite Hanukkah pastime. Many non-Jews may know of dreidel by the song that goes, "Dreidel, dreidel, dreidel - I made it out of clay. And when it's dry and ready, my dreidel I will play."