

With a Perspective:

Hanukkah is here! For many Jewish American families, Hanukkah has taken on the gift giving phenomenon associated with Christmas. Just as some Christian leaders are not pleased with the over commercialization of Christmas, Jewish leaders have often expressed that the commercialization of Hanukkah, a festival to mark the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem in 200BC, and how a small amount of oil miraculously burned for eight nights, is missing the relevance of the holiday. There is irony in the fact that Hanukkah teaches about the Jewish people standing up in the face of oppression, refusing to assimilate and yet the recent traditions of gift giving has assimilated the surrounding Christian culture into Jewish rituals. Quoted from an [article](#) in Time Magazine “It’s sort of antithetical to Hanukkah, to do someone else’s ritual, when Hanukkah was about the re-establishing of our own.” Of course no-one denies the fun and excitement of gift giving and receiving, and the power of celebrating light in the darkness.

As a final thought to consider, Hanukkah is not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible but only in the books of Maccabees, which makes it less important than the major Jewish holy days. (Passover, Yom Kippur, and Rosh Hashanah). This may come as a surprise to onlookers, who see the convenient amalgamation of “The Holidays” which allows us to overlook the more significant religious holidays. In fact the Jewish holy days of import fall throughout the school year bestowing a regular struggle on students who must choose between observing the holiday and being in school, attending sports, or other extracurricular events. Perhaps we could count our blessings that Hanukkah is not more taxing on the Jewish soul, since this year the week in the Hebrew calendar that Hanukkah is celebrated falls firmly over Finals Week... and there’s not much any of us can do about that!