

# Beth El Congregation Comes Together to Celebrate Hanukkah

DEC 15, 2017

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ASHLEY MILLER

amiller@nvdaily.com



Mariana Teran, 12, left, Aliyah Desimone, 11, center, and her twin brother Dagan, right, light their menorahs inside Beth-El Congregation in Winchester. Tuesday marked the first night of Hanukkah. Rich Cooley/Daily

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WINCHESTER – Rabbi Peter Grumbacher is hoping many people accept his invitation to join him today at Beth El Congregation as he leads Erev Shabbat Services, including prayer, singers and fiddle music.

Ellen Zimmerman, First Vice President of Beth El Congregation encourages the community to celebrate Hanukkah, a holiday that started over 2,000 years ago.

For Dagan Desinone, 11, of Winchester, Hanukkah means bringing family together. *“To me Hanukkah is important because it teaches us the importance of those eight days and to worship God,”* Dagan said. *“It also teaches me the importance of praying.”*

Over an eight-day span, Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Holy Temple. During the second century BCE, a small band of faithful Jews, led by Judah the Maccabee, defeated the Greeks, drove them from their lands and reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. When they sought to light the temple’s menorah, they found only a single cruse of olive oil remained. They lit the menorah, and miraculously the one-day supply of oil lasted for eight days until new oil could be prepared.

To commemorate and publicize these miracles, the congregation will gather as one and light their menorahs as a dedication to the holiday and enjoy a potluck dinner. They will also affix a mezuzah — a small box with a prayer on a piece of parchment inside — to their doorposts, symbolizing motion or the essence of time.

Cathy Weiss of Winchester has been a member of Beth El for over a year. *“It really becomes beautiful over the span of the eight days,”* she said. *“It’s the darkest time of the year and that light is so encouraging.”*

Zimmerman explained the service is taking place this evening because it’s more practical. Beth El Congregation is the Northern Shenandoah Valley’s synagogue. The congregation is made up of 75 families or individuals who come from a wide area.

On Sunday morning, December 17th, the children in religious school will be celebrating Hanukkah in various ways, including making potato latkes, and packing gift bags of goodies to be donated to Winchester Area Temporary Thermal Shelter clients over Christmas.

The 2017 celebration began Tuesday and concludes December 20.

**IF YOU GO**

7:30 p.m. today at 520 Fairmont Ave., Winchester  
Open to the public

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