

Sholom TR

Therapeutic Recreation Update for Sholom Home West



Celebrating November

**Native American
Heritage Month**

Dia de Los Muertos
November 1

Diwali
November 4

Veterans Day
November 11

Thanksgiving Day
November 25

Hanukkah
November 28–December 6

November Birthdays!

Iosif P / 3N Nov 3

Carol W / 3N Nov 10

Ruth S / 2N Nov 11

Andrea C / 3S Nov 21

Oil-Fueled Holiday

The evening of November 28 brings the first night of Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Light. The holiday celebrates the victory of Jewish rebels over the tyrannical Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who forced them to worship Greek gods and desecrated their temple in Jerusalem. The Jews reclaimed their temple and set about rebuilding the altar, cleansing, and rededicating it, but to do so they required pure olive oil with which to light the Temple menorah.

The Syrian-Greeks' desecration had been thorough; they had defiled almost every jug of oil in the temple. Just one precious cruse was found. It would take eight days for the Jews to make more purified oil. Miraculously, that one cruse, expected to last only one day, instead lasted for eight, long enough for the Jews to purify more oil. And this is why Hanukkah lasts for eight nights. And this is why oil is the star of the holiday.

While most Hanukkah menorahs are lit with candles, some are fueled with oil just like the menorah of the Temple in Jerusalem. Oil isn't used just for lighting the menorah; many other Hanukkah traditions involve oil.

Frying potato latkes in oil is another tradition that reminds Jews of the miracle of the oil. But why potato latkes? The answer lies, perhaps, in the story of Judith, a beautiful Jewish widow who lived in Israel in the sixth century BC. When an Assyrian army invaded her town, Judith met with the enemy general, who was dazzled by her beauty. Judith served him salty cheese pancakes, *levivot*, and he became so thirsty that he called for wine until he had fallen into a drunken sleep. Judith promptly beheaded the general, an act that inspired the Jews to drive out the Assyrians. In the Middle Ages, Jews in Rome were still honoring Judith by making cheese pancakes for Hanukkah. But over the centuries, especially in the impoverished Jewish communities of eastern Europe where potatoes were cheap and plentiful, the potato latke usurped *levivot* as the traditional food of Hanukkah.

