

## You Mean There's Something Besides Christmas?

Amber McKinney  
Staff Writer

At this time of year, shopping centers, super markets, towns, and almost all other public places are decorated for Christmas. Some decorations include elaborate flashing, moving light displays, massive plastic snowglobes with Frosty trapped inside them, and North Pole Wonderlands where well-meaning Santa imposters hand out candy and promise kids that they can have whatever they want for Christmas. What you don't see displayed in the towns are giant menorahs from Hanukkah, light-up kinaras from Kwanzaa, or piñatas from Las Posadas. The hype that surrounds Christmas often overshadows the other holidays that take place during the winter holiday season.

Eid al-Adha, also known as the Festival of the Sacrifice, is an important religious festival celebrated by Islamic people. According to ReligionFacts.com, Eid al-Adha "commemorates God's gift of the ram in place of the biblical patriarch Ibrahim's (Abraham's) son Isma'il (Ishmael)." It also celebrates the completion of the *hajj* (pilgrimage) rites. The *hajj* is a very important religious pilgrimage to Mecca that all healthy and financially able Muslims are supposed to complete during their lifetime.

Since the Islamic religion is based on the lunar calendar, Eid al-Adha does not fall on the same days every year on the Gregorian calendar, the calendar most of the world adheres to nowadays. Therefore,

Eid al-Adha doesn't always fall during the winter holidays. This year Eid al-Adha begins on December 20, and the festival lasts for three days.

Adam Yosef Ali, a writer for the British Broadcasting Company, writes that "Muslims all over the world sacrifice an animal during this Eid. This sacrifice is known as Qurbani." The Qurbani is shared with other people; Ali writes, "One third is for the poor, one third for family and friends and the last third for [a Muslim's] own household." Prayer is also an important part of Eid al-Adha.

Hanukkah is a religious holiday celebrated in the Jewish community. It's also known as Chanukkah, the Festival of Lights, the Feast of Dedication, and the Feast of the Maccabees. Some of us remember this holiday because Tommy Pickles from Nickelodeon's TV show Rugrats celebrated Hanukkah. Hanukkah starts on December 25<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Day, but unlike Christmas, it lasts for eight days.

According to History.com, "Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem by Judas Maccabee in 165 BC after the Temple had been profaned by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, king of Syria and overlord of Palestine." When the temple was being rededicated, there was enough oil for the temple's menorah for only one day; however, the oil miraculously lasted for eight days. Hanukkah celebrates this miracle.

According to one internet source, the only

religious observance that occurs during Hanukkah is the lighting of candles: "The candles are arranged in a candelabrum called a menorah... that holds nine candles: one for each night, plus a shammas (servant) at a different height." Each night of Hanukkah, another candle is added to the menorah and lit. Other traditions observed during Hanukkah are eating fried foods and playing a gambling game called dreidel.

Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday celebrated by African-Americans, and it is also a pan-African holiday. According to the Official Kwanzaa Website, Kwanzaa was created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor in the Department of Black Studies at California State University. Kwanzaa begins on December 26 and lasts until January 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Official Kwanzaa Website states that "Kwanzaa's reason for existence, its length of seven days, its core focus and its foundation are all rooted in its concern with values." The seven candles that are used during Kwanzaa are symbolic of the Nguzo Saba or Seven Principles: Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, and Faith. Everything used in the Kwanzaa ceremony is symbolic and holds a deep meaning for those participating in Kwanzaa.

According to the Official Kwanzaa Website, "Kwanzaa was created to reaffirm and restore our rootedness in African culture...[and] to serve as a regular com-

munal celebration to reaffirm and reinforce the bonds between us as a people."

Las Posadas is a religious and cultural holiday celebrated in Mexico. It starts on December 16 and lasts until December 24. During Las Posadas, a *posada* party is held at someone's home every evening during the celebration. According to the Mexico Connect website, the parties are held to "commemorate Mary and Joseph's cold and difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of shelter."

Each night, the children dress up, one child as an angel and the others in silver and gold robes, and walk around the village with the adults following them. Everyone sings songs and carries candles; eventually, they end up back at the house where the party was held. Half of the crowd goes into the house while the other half stays outside. The half of the crowd that is outside begs to come in, commemorating what Mary and Joseph had to do when they reached Bethlehem. The outside half of the crowd is eventually let inside, and in the end everyone breaks open a piñata filled with all sorts of goodies.

If anyone is feeling annoyed that Christmas lasts only one day while many of these other holidays last a week or more, don't be upset. Since employees at the malls and Wal-mart start putting up Christmas decorations before Halloween, people who observe Christmas can technically celebrate for almost two months! During the holiday seasons, Christmas isn't the only holiday

that's celebrated, but it's the one that gets the most attention. Ask your friends what celebrations they observe during the winter holidays; you might be surprised at the answers.

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pizzazz, stage your desk with your hardest class. Make sure to include your book and some work in progress. Math would be more impressive.

**Have fun in college.** This is by far the most important tip. College is meant to be a time for exploration and growing friendships. Don't let your parents make things any more stressful than they already are. College is much harder now than it was when your parents were there. Some of their tips will help you out, but some things they really have no control over. Let them know when they are overstepping their boundaries. But be careful. Your boundaries are definitely different from theirs.

**Math** cont. from pg. 5

"Kraines Mathematics Competition," which can be found in the list of MAT courses as well as the ZZ - Committees courses. Registration forms for this year's exam are available by emailing burkhead@meredith.edu or pick up from, SMB 277. Forms can also be obtained from any faculty member of the department. All completed registration forms should be returned to the department by Tuesday, December 4.