

the

MILFORD

JEWISH VOICE

ב"ה

CHANUKAH 5785 / DECEMBER 2024

ISSUE 14

## DEAR FRIENDS

This has been a rough year, unprecedented (in our lifetimes) in the scope and spread of antisemitism. What would have been shocking merely 14 months ago is no longer. We have become accustomed to hearing and seeing things that we never imagined we'd experience in 2024.

So much darkness.

From where do we draw strength? The two miracles of Chanukah are well known: the victory of the Maccabees over the much stronger Syrian Greeks, and the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days. Scholars have, at length, discussed the significance of each miracle and how they impacted history. But there's another miracle hidden between the lines. When the Jews entered the Holy Temple and saw it completely desecrated, utterly destroyed and in ruins, it would have made sense for them to return to their homes, take some time to regroup, and plan for how they were going to recover in the aftermath of the war and devastation. And even if they decided to try and light the Menorah, after a cursory search for pure oil, when none was found, it would have been only natural to concede defeat. But they did not give up, and due to their unyielding belief and persistence, we have the miracle of Chanukah. Because Chanukah is really about the miracle of hope. Hope in the triumph of good over evil. Despite all the darkness, to remember that there is still good to be found.

To continue believing, no matter how hard and difficult.

To stand proudly, when it would make most sense to shrink into the shadows of doubt and fear.

To continue the legacy of the Maccabees, who still had the courage to fight despite overwhelming odds.

To search for the oil when it seemed an impossible task.

To light a Menorah when the effort seemed futile, for the amount of oil was insufficient.

When we hope, we are not merely walking in our ancestors' footsteps — we are marching in them. When we continue living as proud Jews, we shine our light unto the world, offering hope that can never be extinguished.

We continue to pray for the return of the hostages and for the peace and safety of Jews in Israel and around the world.



Wishing you a joyous & miraculous Chanukah!

Rabbi Schneur & Charie Wilhelm

## CHANUKAH FACTS

YOU SHOULD KNOW:



**Why is Chanukah eight nights long? The Talmud asks and answers:**

*The sages taught: On the 25th of Kislev, the days of Chanukah are eight. One may not eulogize on them, and one may not fast on them. This is because when the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary. And when the Chashmonean monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that remained with the seal of the High Priest. And there was sufficient oil there to light the candelabrum for only one day. A miracle occurred, and they lit the candelabrum from it for eight days. The next year, the sages instituted those days and made them holidays with the recitation of Hallel and prayers of thanksgiving."*

1

EIGHT NIGHTS = MIRACLE LIGHTS

But there's more. Symbolically, "seven" is associated with the natural world: There are seven days of the week, seven musical notes, and seven years in the Sabbatical cycle. The world itself was created in

seven days. "Eight," however, represents the infinite and supernatural, in contrast to the finite and natural. The number eight evokes the transcendent and the G-dly. Eight is the number of miracles.

## 2 LIGHT AFTER DARK

The Chanukah candles must burn after night falls, since their purpose is to bring light into darkness. But they need to be lit early enough (not too late) that people will still be up to see them. The lights need to be seen so they can serve their function of reminding others of the great miracles G-d wrought.

## 3 BEFORE POTATOES THERE WAS... CHEESE!

Today, there is a widespread custom to enjoy potato latkes on Chanukah, since the oil they are fried in reminds us of the miracle of the flames on the Temple menorah burning for eight days. But there is an older custom to eat cheese pancakes on Chanukah, which is reminiscent of the dairy (and intoxicating) meal that the brave Judith fed the Greek general before she decapitated him in his sleep, saving her village. Apparently, cheese latkes morphed into potato latkes (potatoes were unknown in the Old World until the late 16th century), and a new custom was born.

## 4 YOU LIGHT A HILLEL MENORAH

In the days of the Talmud, there were two major academies of learning: Hillel and Shammai. The House of Hillel taught that every night of Chanukah we add another candle — as we do today. The House of Shammai, however, maintained that we begin with eight lights on the first night and light one less flame every night, ending Chanukah with a single flame. Tradition tells us that when Moshiach comes, we will follow the rulings of the House of Shammai. But until then, there is a beautiful lesson to be learned from the Hillel model: add more light every night. Every little bit of light adds up to create something brilliant.

## 5 SYRIANS, GREEKS, HELLENISTS, OR YEVANIM?

We sometimes hear of Greeks, Syrians, or even Hellenists in the Chanukah story. So who exactly were the interlopers who were expelled by the Maccabees? All of the above! After the death of Alexander the Great, his empire was broken up: the Seleucid Greek Empire was based in Syria, and the Ptolemaic Empire had its base in Alexandria, Egypt. The soldiers stationed in Judea belonged to the Syrian Greeks. And who are the Hellenists and the Yevanim? The very same people: Hella is the Greek word for Greece, and Yavan is how we say it in Hebrew.

## 6 PLACEMENT MATTERS



The most common custom is to light the menorah at a window. In Mishnaic times, however, the menorah would be placed outside, on the left side of the door leading in from the street. Why was the menorah placed to the left of the door? Because the mezuzah is placed on the right side. With the mezuzah on one side and the menorah on the other, you are literally surrounded by holiness. The harsh realities of the diaspora, both sociopolitical and meteorological, forced the menorah to an indoor doorway, and some communities developed the custom to put it on the windowsill instead.



First Menorah Lighting  
on the Milford Green,  
2008

## 7 CHANUKAH IN SPACE

In December of 1993, Space Shuttle Endeavour was sent into space to service the Hubble Space Telescope. One of the astronauts to bravely perform a spacewalk to repair the telescope was Jeffrey Hoffman. Knowing that he would be stuck in space over Chanukah, Hoffman made sure to bring along a dreidel and a traveling menorah so that he'd be able to celebrate. Then, via live satellite communication, he showed his Chanukah supplies, gave his dreidel a twirl in the air, and wished Jews everywhere a happy Chanukah.

## 8 SPREADING THE LIGHT

The purpose of the menorah is to spread awareness to as many people as possible. During Chanukah of 1973, some Chabad yeshivah students were planning to go to Manhattan to distribute menorahs. They figured that if they could put a giant menorah on top of a car, many more people would notice them and take the menorahs they were distributing. Using wooden scraps and cinder blocks, they managed to make a large menorah and tie it down to the roof of a station wagon. The menorah turned out to be a success. By 1974, Rabbi Abraham Shemtov had the unusual, perhaps wild, idea of lighting a menorah right in front of Independence Hall, which houses the Liberty Bell, the icon of American freedom. The concept spread far and wide. At last count, Chabad has set up more than 15,000 large public menorahs. Public lightings and Chanukah events are held in more than 100 countries around the world. Additionally, thousands of menorah-topped vehicles roam the roads, creating holiday awareness in cities, towns, and rural areas everywhere.



A giant menorah  
organized by Chabad  
in Berlin stands at the  
Brandenburg Gate in  
Berlin, Germany

# FEAR IS NOT AN OPTION



Rabbi Zvi Kogan worked tirelessly to grow Jewish life in the UAE. He was murdered by thugs.

Why? Because they want Jews to be afraid.

And it's normal to be afraid.

But for the Jewish people today, fear is not an option.

Not only the events of today, but every event of Jewish history can be told in two ways: As stuff that happened. Or as a chapter of a grand epic.

As stuff that happened, it's all ugly. As a chapter of an epic, with patience to keep reading the story, everything points toward greatness.

And that is how we tell our story.

Take the story of Abraham. G-d tells him to leave his home to go to a wonderful, promised land. He arrives there to find a famine. He teaches goodness and kindness, but has to chase away his own child, Ishmael. He argues for Sodom and Gomorrah only to see them exterminated the next morning. He commits the ultimate act of self-surrender to G-d to almost give away his only child, only to come home to find his beloved wife has died.

We don't tell the story that way.

We tell the story of Abraham, our father, who stood up against the entire world. We are the stars in the sky that G-d showed him would be his. We tell how his faithfulness has stood by us to preserve us for millennia. We speak of a man who changed the course of history,

indeed, the man who made progress a possibility, so that all the goodness there is today is on his account.

Our father, Abraham, had the most magnificent life of any man in history. Because we tell his life story not as a thing that happened in the past, but as a living heart beating within the present.

The same with the stories of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The same with Moses and the Exodus. The same with every event upon the long and arduous journey of our people. At any point in time, it is both horribly ugly and a magnificent epic of resilience that could only be divine.

It all depends on one thing:

Was there purpose to Zvi Kogan's life? Only the most sordid nihilist could believe otherwise. It was a beautiful life. It was filled with meaning. It was an open miracle.

"When a part of your body is cut off," Zvi's father said at his son's funeral, "it hurts. We just had part of our souls cut off. It's painful. We are small people and do not understand G-d's ways. We must fill in that which is missing. We must do like Zvi. Look for what others need. Maybe this is what G-d wants from us now."

Is there purpose and meaning to the tragedy of his murder? To the horrors we have experienced over the last thirteen and a half months? To the unimaginable trials of the hostages? To the lives of over 800 heroes whose lives were cut short? To the madness of terrorists posing as protestors on campus and terrorists posing as terrorists let loose on the streets of Amsterdam and Montreal? To the open, unbridled bigotry of international agencies who break their own rules out of their savage lust for hatred?

Jewish people have not been so inspired in centuries, perhaps millennia. The Jewish nation has never been so courageous and powerful. Good and evil have never been so starkly juxtaposed. Evil sits at the verge of its own demise, digging its grave deeper every day. We have witnessed open miracles that exceed those of Elijah and Elishah.

Creatures imprisoned within the granular moments of fleeting time upon Planet Earth can fear.

For the stars shining in the heavens, fear does not exist.

Jew, walk proud. Walk tall. Fill in the void that Zvi Kogan left behind.

**By Tzvi Freeman**

FOOD FOR  
THOUGHT

"The test of faith is whether I can make space for difference. Can I recognize God's image in someone who is not in my image, whose language, faith, ideal, are different from mine? If I cannot, then I have made God in my image instead of allowing Him to remake me in His."

- RABBI DR. JONATHAN SACKS



# UPCOMING EVENTS



## STRATFORD CHANUKAH Party

 **6:30 PM**  
THURSDAY, DEC 26

 **ORONOQUE  
VILLAGE NORTH  
CLUBHOUSE**

MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT - SALAD BAR - LATKES  
\$18 - SUGGESTED DONATION  
SPONSORED BY STRATFORD HADASSAH

**RSVP:**  
[www.JewishMilford.com/chanukah2024](http://www.JewishMilford.com/chanukah2024)



## LUNCH & LEARN

*Join us once monthly for a delicious lunch  
and thought-provoking discussion.*

**MONDAYS, 12:30-1:30**

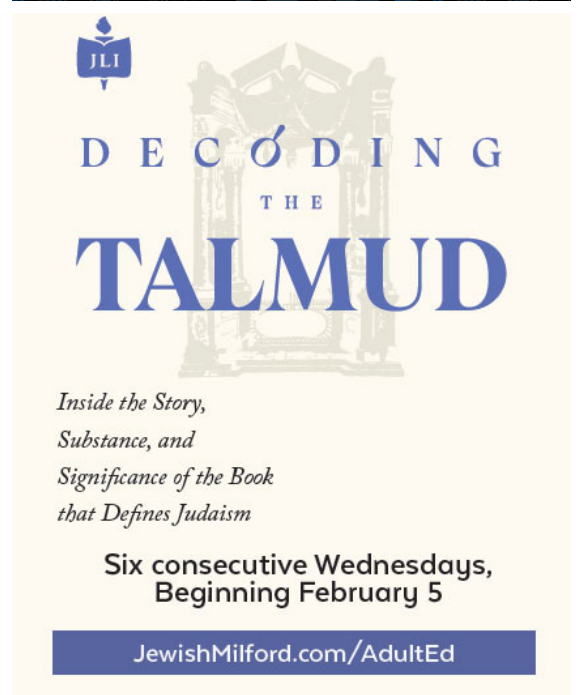
**JANUARY 13**  
**FEBRUARY 24**  
**MARCH 24**


More info & RSVP:  
[www.JewishMilford.com/lunch](http://www.JewishMilford.com/lunch)



## LIGHT UP WEST HAVEN!

MENORAH LIGHTING ON  
THE WEST HAVEN GREEN  
**MONDAY, DEC. 30 @ 4:30 PM**



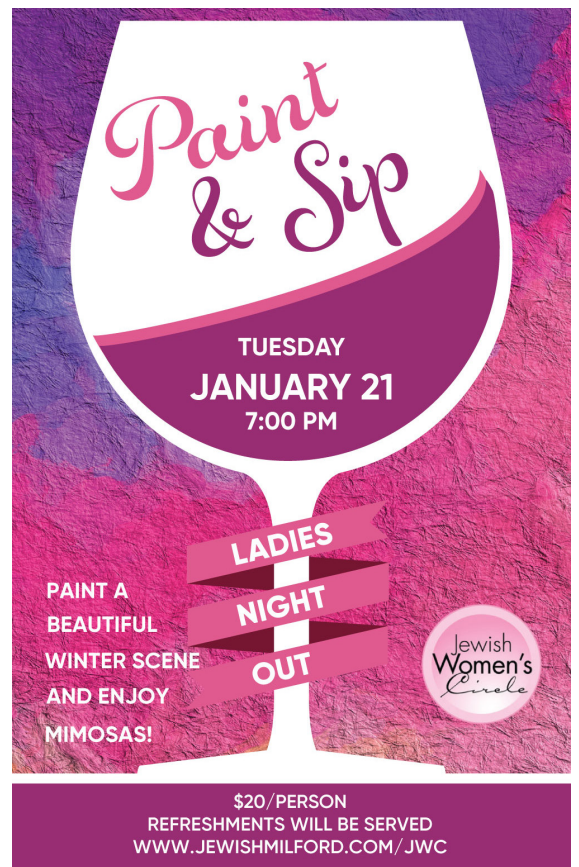


## DECODING THE TALMUD

*Inside the Story,  
Substance, and  
Significance of the Book  
that Defines Judaism*

Six consecutive Wednesdays,  
Beginning February 5

[JewishMilford.com/AdultEd](http://JewishMilford.com/AdultEd)




## Paint & Sip

**TUESDAY  
JANUARY 21  
7:00 PM**

**LADIES  
NIGHT  
OUT**

PAINT A  
BEAUTIFUL  
WINTER SCENE  
AND ENJOY  
MIMOSAS!



\$20 / PERSON  
REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED  
[WWW.JEWISHMILFORD.COM/JWC](http://WWW.JEWISHMILFORD.COM/JWC)

HELD HOSTAGE BY HAMAS:  
MORAN STELA YANAI



JWC FLOWER FUSION &  
BLINTZES



JWC COLOR ME HAPPY

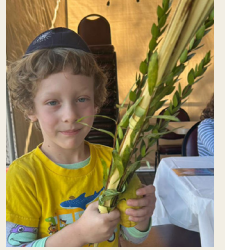


MEGA CHALLAH BAKE

**MEN'S SCOTCH & STEAK**



**CELEBRATING SUKKOT**



**SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE**



**FIRST FRIDAYS**  
*Celebrating Shabbat Together*

Join us on the first Friday of each month as we welcome Shabbat with prayer and song, followed by Shabbat dinner. Make Shabbat a meaningful and cherished part of your week.

Upcoming Dates:  
Jan. 3, Feb. 7, March 7

RSVP: [www.JewishMilford.com/fridays](http://www.JewishMilford.com/fridays)

**BLT**  
BAGELS. LOX. TEFILLIN.  
IN BY 9 AM, OUT BY 10 AM!

**MEN'S MONTHLY TEFILLIN CLUB**

UPCOMING DATES: JAN. 5, FEB. 16

**Rabbi and Chanie**, we had a wonderful evening yesterday at the Saturday Night Live. The food was fantastic due to Adam and his staff, and the entertainment was fun! Thanks again,

**LORNA & PAUL PINCUS**



The challah bake was truly magical...at one point all 350 women stood up with our candles singing Am Yisrael Chai. I cannot recall a more inspiring gathering as women of all ages joined in support of pride in our Judaism and celebration of G-d's blessings, regardless of what is going on in the world today to tear us apart.

**JOYCE SALTMAN**



**Rabbi!** We would like to say thank you to you, Chanie, and the children for a delightful Soup in the Sukkah event yesterday. Chanie's words were an instruction manual for life, especially in the period we have been in.

**JERRY**



What an amazing event. Gathering 350 women in one space for a huge Mitzvah was quite a feat. As usual, anything you do is filled with meaning and beauty... the way everyone's bowl was filled with prepared ingredients, stickers specially made, aprons with such a lovely design, thoughtful arrangement of people.. what a perfect job! Thank you so very much.

**PHYLIS SATIN**



**Rabbi & Chanie**, Thank you for making our Shul such a wonderful place of worship, learning, and community. It is truly my favorite place to be.

**SHAUN LIEBSKIND**



**Rabbi!** Thank you for your inviting us in to your Sukkah in a pleasurable and joyful way while traveling through CT. All the best and much success.

**ELI WINOGRAD, NJ**



Sincere thanks for making me feel so welcome at the lovely Shabbat service and delicious dinner.

**LISA G.**



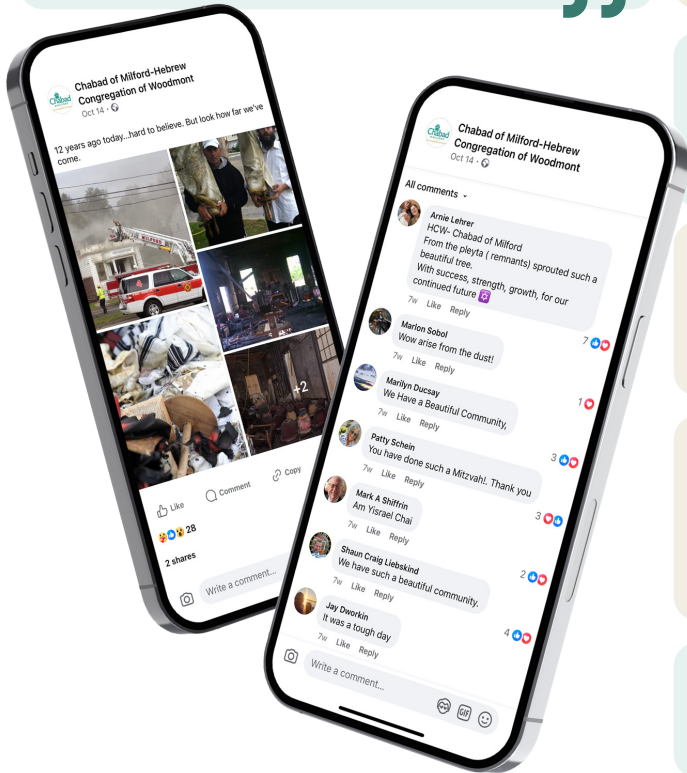
What a nice surprise. Thank you for the challah. It was both beautiful and delicious.

**SUSAN S.**



**Rabbi**, Thank you for coming by and putting up the mezuzahs. Have a great week!

**LESLIE MARKOW**



**WE SALUTE OUR CHAI CLUB MEMBERS!**

**CHAI**

- Susan Alpert
- Michele DiBella
- Marilyn & Jim Ganis
- Lois Fagan
- Dana McConnell
- Rebecca Heyman
- Kayla & Sholom Kramer
- Leah & Sholom Laine
- Shaun Liebskind
- Vivan & Plinio Perez
- Lorna & Paul Pincus
- Joyce Saltman
- Claire Zeidenberg



**BRONZE CHAI**

- Steve Finson & Marsha Cohen
- Adam Heyman
- Stuart Rosenkrantz



**CHAI CLUB**  
MONTHLY GIVING

**GOLD CHAI**

- Dalia Coleman

**DIAMOND CHAI**

- Phylis & Joseph Satin

To join the CHAI CLUB, or to find out more, please visit [JEWISHMILFORD.COM/CHAI CLUB](http://JEWISHMILFORD.COM/CHAI CLUB)



Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont

CHABAD OF MILFORD-HCW  
15 EDGEFIELD AVENUE  
MILFORD, CT 06460  
WWW.JEWISHMILFORD.COM



CHANUKAH  
INSIGHTS



FEAR IS NOT AN  
OPTION!



PHOTOS:  
CAPTURED  
MOMENTS



UPCOMING  
EVENTS

**CHANUKAH  
at the  
MALL!**

**MONDAY, DEC. 30**  
6:00 PM | CT Post Mall

Dreidels - Donuts - Gelt Drop - Face Painting - Crafts - Music

# MENORAH CAR PARADE

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29**  
**5<sup>TH</sup> NIGHT OF CHANUKAH**

**4:30 PM**

PARADE DEPARTS FROM  
CHABAD-HCW

**5:00 PM**

END AT MILFORD GREEN

**5:10 PM**

MENORAH LIGHTING ON  
THE GREEN



**DONUTS - DREIDELS - HOT LATKES**  
**CIDER - CHOCOLATE GELT**