



Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission

December 2011 **Chronicle**

Local Jewish Federation plans full schedule of Hanukkah celebrations

**By Steven Schimmel
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Jewish Federation of
Cumberland,
Gloucester and
Salem Counties**

“The Festival
of Lights”

This coming week Jews around the globe will gather with family and friends in joyous celebration of the holiday of Hanukkah. Although Hanukkah has been observed for more than two millennia, it is not a biblical holiday, and historically is not Judaism’s most important celebration.

Nevertheless, Hanukkah has taken on more meaning in the modern era and can serve as a symbolic reminder of Judaism’s values.

Hanukkah commemorates the war in the year 166 B.C.E. between the Jewish nation and the Greek empire within which Israel of that era found itself. At the time the Hellenistic and Jewish cultures were in serious competition. The Greeks were



polytheistic and their ideals on physical beauty were viewed as superficial in Jewish society.

In contrast the Jews were monotheists and a nation known for theological, judicial, and ethical accomplishments. The Jewish nation

Rabbi Alfredo Winter of Beth Israel Congregation in Vineland is shown lighting the Menorah, part of the Hanukkah tradition.

ultimately fought a war against the Greeks to retain their unique religion and resist assimilation into Hellenistic culture and beliefs.

People of the Jewish faith light candles on Hanukkah to commemorate the successful campaign of the Jewish army against the Greek Empire
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Schedule of Hanukkah Events

Sunday, Dec. 18. 2 p.m.

: Wheaton Arts, pre-Hanukkah celebration

Tuesday, Dec. 20, 6 p.m.

Community Hanukkah Festival,
Beth Israel Congregation, Vineland

Wednesday, Dec. 21, 1 p.m.

Hanukkah luncheon, Beth Israel Congregation, Vineland

Friday, Dec. 23, 5:30 p.m.

Hanukkah dinner, Sons of Jacob Congregation, Vineland

Tuesday, Dec. 27, 5:30 p.m.

Service at Alliance Chapel, Gershal Avenue, Norma

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Hanukkah symbolizes the triumph of light over dark



Mollie Fisher is shown helping Mikela Simon light the Menorah at Temple Beth Hillel-Beth Abraham in this file photo.

(Photos courtesy of the Jewish Federation)

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and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem.

In the book of the Maccabees it is written that when the temple was rededicated there was only enough oil to keep the holy lamp lit for one day, but miraculously the flame lasted eight days, which was enough time to make more oil.

The symbol of this rededication was the lighting of the oil lamp, the menorah, with pure oil [which is why traditional Hanukkah foods are cooked in oil]. This act, the bringing of light into the darkness, symbolizes the true Jewish take on Hanukkah.

Hanukkah is about bringing light into the world, about bringing the light of spirituality, love, g-d, or happiness into our homes. Hanukkah is indeed a celebration of triumph of light over dark, polytheism and monotheism, the

physical and the spiritual, the outside culture against the small Jewish nation trying to withstand assimilation and disappearance.

The lessons and symbols of Hanukkah are timeless and indeed quite relevant in today's modern world.

In our local community we will indeed be celebrating! The schedule of events is listed on page one.

The major event, the **Community Hanukkah Festival**, will feature food prepared by the Beth Israel Sisterhood, traditional Israeli games and music, and community menorah lighting..

Also, be sure to check with our local Synagogues, Beth Israel, Temple Beth Hillel-Beth Abraham, Sons of Jacob and Temple B'nai Tikvah-Beth Israel for other wonderful activities.

For information about any of these events, call the Jewish Federation at [856] 696-4445.