

The background of the entire cover is a dark navy blue. It is decorated with stylized white and light blue snowflakes of various sizes and shapes, as well as dark blue pine branches with white needles. Small white and gold stars are scattered throughout the background. The title 'Winter Holiday Magazine' is centered in the upper half. 'Winter' is in a white serif font, 'Holiday' is in a large, bold, gold serif font, and 'Magazine' is in a white serif font.

Winter Holiday Magazine

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Hanukkah 2019 MENU

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10 Things to Do in Philadelphia in December

ERIC SCHUCHT | JE STAFF

The weather outside may be frightful, but festivals, candlelightings and craft shows are events that people may find delightful.

Philadelphia is filled to the brim with activities to keep your spirits warm during the cold season. So put on your hats and jackets, fill up your hot cocoa mug and head out into the winter wonderland for tons to see and tons to do. For suggestions, here are 10 of the many things to do around the area this December.

See 10 Things, Page 8

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10 Things

Continued from Page 7

1. Philadelphia Zoo

The Philadelphia Zoo has been transformed through Jan. 5 into a chilly delight. Visitors will witness LumiNature, a multimedia light and music experience. Grab some hot chocolate and adult beverages as performers stroll across the 12 different illuminated areas to see, each with a unique wildlife message and theme. Make sure to watch out for lions, tigers and bears — oh my!



▲ LumiNature Northern Lights exhibit at The Philadelphia Zoo
facebook.com/philadelphiazoo

2. The Hidden Maccabee Sister

Chanukah commemorates Judah Maccabee, but what of his sister, Judith? While lesser-known, she also had a part to play in the Jewish restoration of the Second Temple. This presentation at Gratz College at noon on Dec. 5 will have Congregation Adath Jeshurun's Rabbi Shai Cherry use art, history and Jewish text to tell the story of a person who has been marginalized and misunderstood for centuries. The lecture costs \$24 and includes a kosher lunch.



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3. Latke/Vodka Fundraiser Party

Warm yourself with latkes and vodka from Congregation Rodeph Shalom at 7 p.m. on Dec. 6, at its annual Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art fundraiser. The museum is located inside the synagogue and has hosted exhibits since 1975. The party helps to support the work of the institution in exhibiting contemporary art that illuminates the Jewish experience.

4. Holiday Drink Festivals

Fill your cup or mug at these two drink festivals, both making a return this December to the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks. The ninth annual Valley Forge Beer and Cider Festival on Dec. 14 will have more than 150 beers and ciders available for sampling from close to 20 breweries and cider makers. Alcohol not your thing? Well that same weekend there's the seventh annual Coffee and Tea Festival: Valley Forge, scheduled for Dec. 14-15. Partake in samples while perusing more than 50 exhibitors.

Meantime, the wineries of the Bucks County Wine Trail are hosting an annual Holiday Celebration on Dec. 7-8. Seven wineries will offer spiced wine tastings, cookie sampling and artisanal cheeses while holiday music plays. Get some Chanukah shopping done with special discount pricing on wine gift packs, gift baskets and wine accessories.



5. Craft Show

Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El in Wynnewood offers a chance to shop local at its community-wide 45th annual craft and gift show. Shop across more than 60 vendors at the synagogue from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Dec. 8. Admission is \$3 for one person, but \$5 for two. Happy shopping!



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6. Sixers Vs. Miami Heat Game

Dec. 18 is game day when the 76ers take on the Miami Heat at 7:30 p.m. Join Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel as congregants head to the Wells Fargo Center. The synagogue has 30 tickets reserved, each \$43. Call BZBI at 215-735-5148 for more information on how to reserve your spot. Make checks out to BZBI or Matthew Whitehorn at Dilworth Paxson, 1500 Market St., Suite 350E, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102.

7. Chanukah at KleinLife

The city's largest senior center is getting into the holiday spirit. KleinLife: Northeast Philadelphia will serve a Chanukah meal at 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 20 with entertainment by Sally Mitlas and the Budesza Brothers singing holiday tunes. Then an intergenerational Chanukah candlelighting is planned for 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 23.

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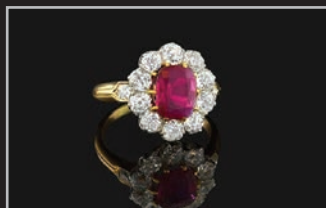


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10 Things

Continued from Page 9

8. Rittenhouse Square Candle Lighting

There are menorah lightings, and then there's the annual ceremonial candlelighting of a giant menorah at Rittenhouse Square. The Jewish community of Center City will come together on the second night of Chanukah, 5 p.m. on Dec. 23, for the lighting and holiday treats. The event is sponsored by Center City Kehillah in cooperation with and funded by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia.



▲ Rittenhouse Square

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9. Lightings and Celebrations

Several area synagogues are getting in on the holiday spirit with activities and ceremonies of their own. The Congregations of Shaare Shamayim will host its annual Chanukah party at 6 p.m. on Dec. 23. There will be face painting, a magic show by Danny Archer of Smoke & Mirrors Magic Theater, balloons, potato latkes, sufganiyot and a menorah lighting, all free of charge.

Congregation Beth Or encourages families to bring their menorah to its Chanukah Community Candle Lighting and Glow Stick Shabbat Worship at 6:15 p.m. on Dec. 27.

And the City of Philadelphia will light up Boathouse Row along the east bank of the Schuylkill River with blue and white lights for Chanukah at 5 p.m. on Dec. 29.

10. National Museum of American Jewish History

While the Christians are away, it's time for the Jews to come out and play. What better way to explore Jewish culture than to spend the day at the National Museum of American Jewish History. Dec. 25 is Being ___ at Christmas, an event with live music from Alex & The Kaleidoscope, an interactive show aimed at children 4-8. So drop off the kids and use the opportunity to see the "Notorious RBG" exhibit on Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. •

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Chanukah Gift Ideas 2019

JESSE BERNSTEIN | JE STAFF

WITHOUT CHEATING: Do you know when the first night of Chanukah is this year? Go ahead, take a guess.

It's Dec. 22! You've actually got some time to figure out what you're going to surprise your friends and family with this year, gathered around the candle-light. That doesn't mean you should drag your feet here, necessarily, but it's not exactly go-time yet.

For you go-getting gift hunters out there, this list is for you. The absolutely definitive list of the Chanukah presents sure to tantalize and delight.



Chinnapong / iStock / Getty Images Plus

Knit Touch-Screen Glove

You're walking down the street on a windy December day, hands stuffed in your pockets, headphones snugly in your ears. You feel your phone buzz in your pocket with what must be an important email from work. In the past, you might have had to do the unthinkable: peel off your gloves in the freezing winter to use your touch screen. But no longer! The knit touch-screen gloves allows you warmth *and* the ability to use your touch-screen phone, for \$8.99 on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



'Hershel and the Hannukah Goblins'

By Eric Kimmel, illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman

It's only the best children's book about the holiday! Follow Hershel as he braves a succession of increasingly fearsome goblins, intent on ruining Chanukah for the whole town. You can find "Hershel and the Hannukah Goblins" on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for \$17.99.



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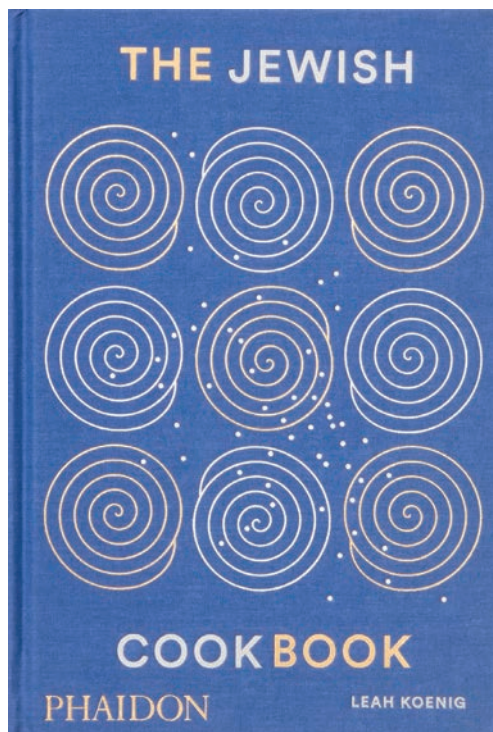
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Chanukah Gift Ideas, 2019



'The Jewish Cookbook,' by Leah Koenig

You can find every manner of chicken, brisket and other staples in Leah Koenig's new cookbook, out this year from Phaidon. Better yet, many of the recipes are drawn from the far corners of world Jewry, rendered with love and beautiful color photographs. For \$35.99 from **Target**, that's a bargain.



Weighted Blanket

We don't make a commission from selling weighted blankets. But man, those things are awesome. These heavy, form-hugging blankets have to be felt to be believed. Find one at laylasleep.com for \$99.



Fit Smart Yoga Mat

It's almost 2020, and you or someone you love haven't given yoga a try yet? Rectify that with this ridiculously high-tech yoga mat that rolls itself up, gives you extra grip as you get sweatier and "comes with bonus yoga routines, powered by Women's Health, that you can hear using your smart speaker." Just \$89.95 on amazon.com.

Maccabot

The Maccabot is a dancing Chanukah robot, presumably brought to life with the spirit of the holiday (also 3 AA batteries). It's 8 inches tall, comes with spinning laser lights and plays "I Have A Little Dreidel," "Chanukah Oh Chanukah" and "Al Hanisim." All of this for \$19.95 from traditionsjewishgifts.com.



Natural Beeswax Chanukah Candles

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Chanukah Gift Ideas, 2019



Russ & Daughters New York Brunch

Ready for this? This Russ & Daughters' brunch for six, available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for \$140, includes one pound of Gaspé smoked salmon, one pound of all-natural cream cheese, six assorted bagels, one chocolate babka, one pound of custom roast coffee, one ceramic coffee cup and an insulated tote bag. No need to make the trek to New York! Bring Russ & Daughters wherever you want. This is an out of the box gift, but it's a guaranteed splash.

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Ember Temperature-Control Smart Mug

This mug, which can be controlled with the Ember app, keeps your hot drink at the exact temperature you prefer (between 120 and 145 degrees). Set the mug on the charging coaster, and get an hour of battery life for the mug. Never take that unexpected lukewarm sip of coffee again. Get it on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for \$69.90.



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Chanukah Gift Ideas

Instant Pot

The Instant Pot is nearly ubiquitous at this point, but there's a reason for that: It's awesome. A combined pressure cooker, slow cooker, rice cooker, steamer, sauté, yogurt maker and warmer. Easy to use, easy to clean and extremely durable. Find an Instant Pot on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for \$67.99.



Small Blue Kiddush Cup

The National Museum of American Jewish History Museum Store has a wealth of good options, even beyond Judaica. But we're partial to this small silver-plated zinc Kiddush cup, hand-painted with rich blue enamel. Pick it up at judaicashop.net for \$70. •

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Let's Get Serious about Chanukah

MATT SILVER | JE STAFF

Let's be real: Chanukah is far from the most theologically significant Jewish holiday on the calendar.

Reasonable minds can differ over whether it counts, strictly speaking, as a holiday at all. Does Chanukah carry the religious or liturgical heft to merit serious observation (or such cultural significance)? Or is it simply a collection of biblically inconsequential festival evenings strung together haphazardly like dorm-room Christmas lights. Frivolity, fried foods and Adam Sandler. Bloated electric bills and just plain bloating.

Was Chanukah always supposed to be like this? Was it ever supposed to be more solemn and sobering in tone, or at least more original — more Jewish and less Jewified Christmas?

See [Chanukah](#), Page 20

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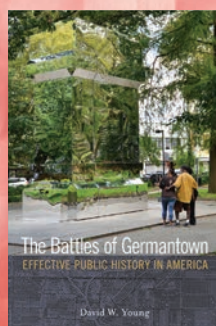
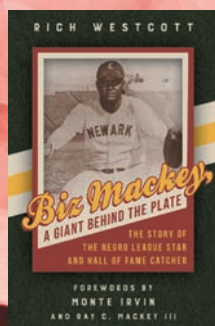
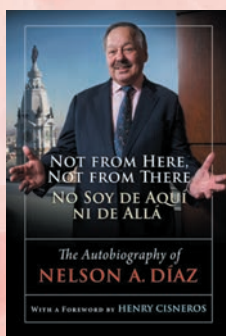
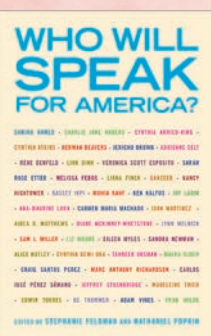
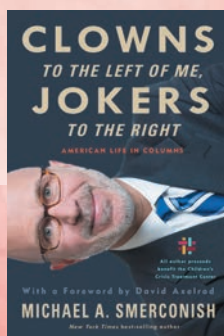
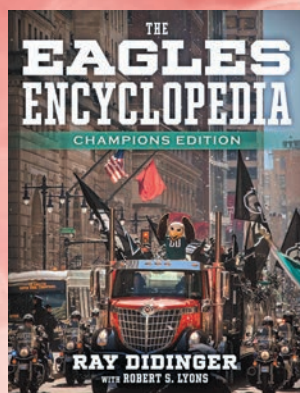
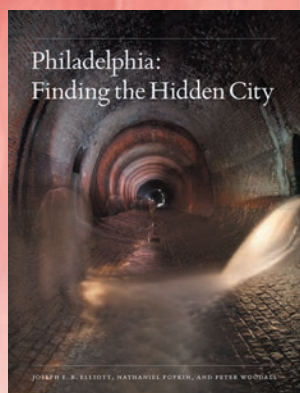
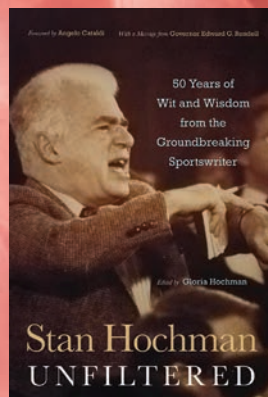
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Chanukah

Continued from Page 19

"It is good to remember that (Chanukah) is not a major holiday, but it has caught on because everybody has a winter festival that's related to light, so I don't think there's anything wrong with celebrating ours," said Rabbi Leah Berkowitz of Congregation Kol Ami in Elkins Park.

"If we're celebrating (Chanukah) and not acknowledging other Jewish holidays, then that's a problem. But if you're doing Sukkot and Passover and Shavuot and the High Holidays and Shabbat — if you're doing all of those things and you want to make a big deal out of Chanukah, then that's fine."

Ah, but what of that semi-queasy irony — a New York Times op-ed from this time last year went so far as to call it "hypocrisy" — in how most secular American Jews have come to celebrate Chanukah, a holiday born out of resisting assimilation? Hypocrisy's probably a bit extreme; many families are trying simply to safely shepherd their children through the minefield of holiday season Christmas envy without suffering righteous admonishment.

Still.

"There is a certain irony to how Chanukah is celebrated because if we look at the historical, biblical origins of Chanukah, it's very much about not assimilating," Berkowitz confirmed. "It's this small group of Jews that fought because they didn't want to assimilate, because they wanted to keep observing Judaism in a strict way. So ... that (Chanukah) is the holiday that's become the Jewish Christmas is the biggest irony."



▲ Religious school students light up the darkness at Congregation Kol Ami in Elkins Park. Photo by Rabbi Leah Berkowitz

The Maccabees fought and killed to avoid being absorbed into the Hellenized world all around them. They adhered to a strict interpretation of what it meant to be Jewish and literally would've rather died than become the Hellenized Jews they reviled, who ate pork and didn't circumcise their male children and participated in pagan rituals.

Many see it as just another battle in the age-old war between fundamentalism and cosmopolitanism — conservatives and traditionalists versus the reform-minded. Throw in a megalomaniacal king in Antiochus IV who, by most historical accounts, was far more hostile to observant Jews than his dynastic predecessors, and you've got ready-made bellicosity. Just add oil ... or take it away.

But perhaps the question shouldn't be whether the Maccabees



Maglara / iStock / Getty Images Plus

would've approved of what Chanukah's become, primarily because the answer is too obvious. Of course, they wouldn't have. How most American Jews celebrate Chanukah today would've terrified Judah and company, and these weren't men who scared easily.

But so what? So what if how we celebrate their most unlikely victory, and the miracle that followed, isn't necessarily in keeping with their highest ideals? So what if while our Hebrew school kids sing Mattathias bold, five brave sons had he: Eliezer, Simon, John, Jonathan and Judah Maccabee, we're out buying and wrapping the latest must-have iteration of PlayStation, attending to our most unseemly consumerist compulsions just like all the other Christmas-celebrating Americans?

According to clergy on both sides of the aisle, Chanukah and Christmas, despite very real differences, both exist to light up the darkness. And the way to make sure that Chanukah has not lost its power to illuminate — literally, spiritually, existentially — is not by abandoning its celebration; it doesn't even necessitate a cold-turkey approach to the arguably maladjusted Chanukah Frankenstein that we hath wrought.

It's just by using Chanukah for some good, too. Addition by addition. Keeping the frivolity, keeping the fun, and injecting some meaning, too. Clergy in the know say the power of Chanukah is all in how you use it; you know, motion in the ocean type stuff.

"One thing that I do to bring meaning into the season is I do a *tzedakah* menorah," said Berkowitz about a custom born out of family Chanukahs that she's exported to Kol Ami's religious school. "So every night, I do light a candle. But instead of giving a gift for each candle, I give *tzedakah* to a certain cause. And I try to pick causes that would be connected to people I'd be giving gifts to."

But the clerics agree: living your best Chanukah isn't about extremes. Avoid the baby and bathwater scenario.

"You don't have to do (your version of the *tzedakah* menorah) instead of gifts," Berkowitz clarified. "Because, while we don't want to compete with Christmas, we want to make Chanukah as beautiful as any other holiday so that kids have warm memories of it and don't feel deprived."

"So I wouldn't say don't get your kids gifts, I would say while you're giving gifts, also consider *tzedakah* and giving your kid the opportunity to give *tzedakah* and letting them know that that's a gift also."

See **Chanukah**, Page 22

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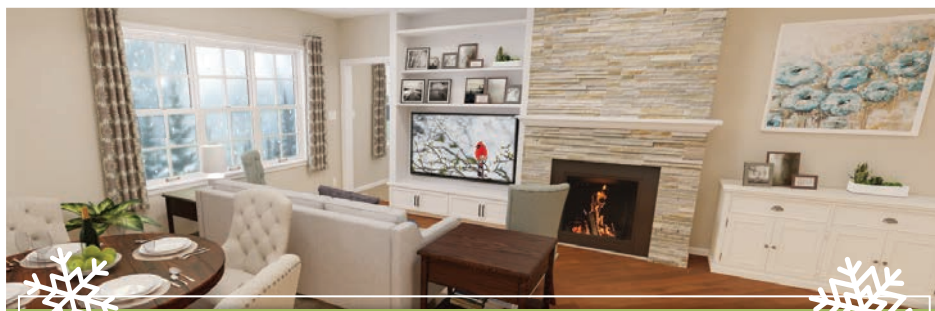
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Chanukah

Continued from Page 21

Much of how we live today would probably not have jibed with the ethos guiding the swords of Mattathias the Bold or his five brave sons.

Judah Maccabee, the third and most celebrated son, the legendary general and original Hebrew Hammer, would have found the garden-variety Chanukah bazaar bizarre. He might've branded us blasphemers and used that hammer (legend has it that Judah was called "Hammer" not just because of his ferocity in war but also because the hammer was his battle weapon of choice) of his against us in ways in our civilized society might find untoward. These were heroes and soldiers and tough men, but they lived in brutal times and were brutal.

Should we stop singing their praises then? The Maccabees weren't perfect, and neither are we.

Being Jewish doesn't inoculate us from the American condition and, more broadly, the human one. And it doesn't mean we shouldn't strive for and celebrate the highest of ideals even while, most of the time, falling a good deal short. That's not hypocrisy. That's just living.

So give yourself, and your neighbor who overindulges his kids once a year, a break. And give the Maccabees a break, too. Like us (and like our contemporary celebration of Chanukah), they were products of their time and far from perfect, but they were conquering heroes, nevertheless. When we memorialize their exploits in song, we're not hypocrites; we're not war mongers, either.

Failing all else, do what a rabbi in search of meaning would do: look to the Talmud.

Berkowitz tells of an argument, memorialized therein, between the sages Hillel and Shammai over the proper way to light the Chanukah menorah.

"Shammai argued that you should start with eight candles and diminish to one, because that's what would have happened with the oil," Berkowitz explained.

"But Hillel argued that you should start with one candle and grow to eight, which is what we do [today] ... because 'in matters of holiness, we increase; we do not decrease.'"

So if you're looking to add some sanctity to all the secular this Chanukah, perhaps all that's needed is a new way of looking at lighting the menorah. •

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Chanukah **on the** **Silver Screen:** **How Media Makes** **a Holiday**

SELAH MAYA ZIGHELBOIM | JE STAFF

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This holiday season, the Hallmark Channel added two movies with Jewish characters to its lineup.

And that won't be the only new milestone this winter for the Festival of Lights.

In September, Disney announced its first Jewish princess would debut on "Elena of Avalor," to the delight of Jewish Disney fans everywhere. The new Sephardic princess, who will be voiced by Jamie-Lynn Sigler ("The Sopranos"), will appear on a Chanukah-themed episode of the show.

Over the decades, Chanukah has taken on an increasingly visible role in American culture.

Americans see Chanukah in giant public menorah lightings, in the blue-and-white holiday cards that sit next to the red-and-green ones during December, and in movies and on television screens. Children might see the "Shalom Sesame" characters learning about Chanukah, while adults might see some tongue-in-cheek jokes about the holiday on shows like "Saturday Night Live" or "The Colbert Report" Christmas special.

But that wasn't always the story.

In the early days of television, there was a "tug of war" over Jewish representation in media, explained Eric A. Goldman, film historian and author of "The American Jewish Story Through Cinema," among other works. Some early television shows might have a Jewish episode, where perhaps a rabbi might drop in. Many TV writers were Jewish, but they understood that, as Jews made up only a small fraction of audiences, it didn't make sense to write for them.



▲ Tommy and Chuckie study Torah in secret during the "Rugrats" retelling of the Chanukah story.

YouTube screenshot

That started to change in the '80s and '90s, Goldman said, when Chanukah began to feature more prominently in public life. One early portrayal comes from a TV series called "Thirtysomething," in which an interfaith couple navigates celebrating Chanukah and Christmas.

"It crept in," Goldman noted. "Adam Sandler deserves a lot of credit."

In 1994, during a Weekend Update segment on "Saturday Night Live," Sandler introduced the world to "The Hanukkah Song." In it, he names a number of Jewish celebrities.

"Saturday Night Live" uploaded the clip to YouTube in 2013, and it has garnered more than 3.4 million views. Other

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Media

Continued from Page 9

videos of the song on YouTube have generated millions of more views. In 2002, Sandler released "Eight Crazy Nights," as well.

Media like this "truly contributed to it being a sense of pride, and hey, it's our turn now to put forward our holiday," Goldman said.

Chanukah specials can provide an opportunity for characters to navigate the complexity of interfaith relationships, a reality for most non-Orthodox Jews. In 2003, "The O.C." popularized the term "Chrismukkah." In one episode of "Friends," Ross, dressed in an armadillo costume, teaches his son about Chanukah.

"As interfaith marriage grew and grew and grew, and interfaith marriages were more a reality in this country, Chanukah became more and more ever present," Goldman said.

Chanukah became especially important to children, who might feel a twinge of jealousy when they see their Christian friends partaking in Christmas celebrations (and those Christmas presents). Children's media has a lot to offer those children, too, while teaching non-Jewish children about Judaism.

"An American Tail" opens with a scene of the Mousekewitz family celebrating Chanukah. There's also the "Rugrats" Chanukah special, which children of the '90s and early 2000s recall with nostalgia. Examples like these give children a great sense of pride as they grow up, Goldman said.

Chanukah also fills an educational role in children's media,



▲ Adam Sandler performs "The Hanukkah Song" on "Saturday Night Live."
YouTube screenshot

explained Pamela Nadell, director of the Jewish Studies Program at American University and past president of the Association for Jewish Studies.

"It's a part of the notion of educating our children to understanding the diverse groups that are in American society," Nadell said. "We have this sense of we've got Chanukah, we've got Kwanzaa and we've got Christmas all falling at the same time. The U.S. Post Office is going to issue a Chanukah stamp, alongside its wealth of Christmas stamps. ... It's a way of expressing one's Jewish identity, of recognizing the diversity of America's Jews."

Chanukah's proximity to Christmas, and its friendly symbols of lights, latkes and dreidels, make it an easy choice for children's media, said Diane Ashton, professor at Rowan University and author of "Hanukkah in America: A History."

"The fact that Chanukah is visible in popular media has spread

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▲ The Disney Channel original movie “Full-Court Miracle” is a modern retelling of Chanukah. YouTube screenshot

the expectation that this is the standard thing to do and here’s how to do it,” Ashton said. “Popular culture is very instructive. It really tells people what is expected of them in many ways. It’s done that for Chanukah.”

The visibility of Chanukah, compared to other Jewish holidays, extends beyond media, too. One example is the public giant menorah lightings that Chabad organizes in cities across the country. There aren’t giant seder plates, Goldman noted, or giant sukkahs on Park Avenue.

That is all despite the fact that Chanukah is a minor Jewish holiday. As the Jewish mom in “The Hebrew Hammer” tells her crime-fighting son after he saves Chanukah: “It isn’t even one of the High Holidays. Now, if you had saved Yom Kippur or Passover, you might have what to brag about.”

But the elevation of Chanukah doesn’t have to be a bad thing. “It’s sort of a statement that we live in a culture where we don’t have one religion,” Goldman said. “There is no state religion, and we recognize that Judaism is part of the Judeo-Christian fabric. The rabbis aren’t necessarily happy with it, but Chanukah has become the preeminent Jewish holiday in America, especially for children.” •

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Each and every December, the Jews of America hunker down for another month of Christmas cheer. We may not necessarily want to know every word to “All I Want for Christmas Is You,” yet it is unavoidable; and try as we may to deny it, we have to admit that an Advent calendar full of chocolates does seem to have a leg up on the counting of the Omer.

But a so-called holiday season needs to be enjoyed with ritual. And so, the holy combination of Chinese takeout and double-features — taken in from the comfort of the couch or at the pleasantly empty multiplex — has become a tradition for many of our co-religionists. Dim sum and “Die Hard?” Beef lo mein and “It’s a Wonderful Life?” Dare we say, these combinations give latkes and applesauce a run for their money.

Here, for your reading pleasure, the staff of the *Jewish Exponent* recommends their perfect Chinese food-and-movie combo to make it through Christmas 2019.

Jesse Bernstein: Hunan chicken/“The Irishman” (2019). Have I had many versions of each one before? Yes. Is there something valuable in revisiting old themes with a new twist, over and over? Yes. Is the consumption of each done best when I have nothing else to do that day? Folks, you better believe it’s yes. Hunan chicken is a slow burn with a fiery finish, and so, too, is Martin Scorsese’s “The Irishman,” a new, three-and-a-half-hour mob movie with — get this — Robert De Niro, Al Pacino and Joe Pesci. It’s a movie that’s good the first time and, like Hunan chicken, is sure to reward going back for leftovers.



▲ How does chow mein and “Eight Crazy Nights” sound? Eric Schuch makes the case. Photo by user bob walker, via Flickr

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Matt Silver: Dan Dan Noodles from Han Dynasty/“A Serious Man” (2009). Larry Gopnik is trying as hard as he can to be a mensch, which in his suburban Midwestern milieu of 1967 is defined narrowly, and vaguely, as “a serious man.” Gopnik’s neighbor and would-be cuckold, Sy Abelman, is considered a serious man but is really a fraud, a pedantic blowhard. No one but Gopnik seems to notice.

Gopnik’s Jewish day school-educated son, approaching bar mitzvah, is lost in a malaise of pot smoke and Jefferson Airplane lyrics, and his daughter is systematically looting cash from his wallet to save up for a nose job. Throw in a grades-for-cash boondoggle from which Gopnik (a university professor) can’t extricate himself and a tenure committee poised to pounce on any perceived misstep, and it really starts to feel like Hashem must be punishing this beleaguered math-geek for something.

The more he learns, the less he seems to know. Everywhere he turns for advice — from his divorce lawyer, to his dentist, to a parade of junior rabbis (the senior rabbi, Rabbi Marshak is always “thinking” and, thus, too busy to meet with him) — he’s given some abstract parable, some indecipherable piece of spiritual gobbledygook.

In one memorable scene, Gopnik, a physics professor, teaches a lecture hall full of bewildered students Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. As we see the entire lecture hall shot from on high, blackboard filled with incomprehensible mathematic scribble, Gopnik finishes his proof and, with resignation, enlightens: “It proves we can’t ever really know what’s going on.” Gopnik pauses, before continuing: “But even though you can’t figure anything out, you will be responsible for it on the midterm.”



▲ Matt Silver recommends Dan Dan noodles to go along with any viewing of “A Serious Man” Photo courtesy of user jschoelver

A movie so contemplative and funny and rich in layers calls for Chinese food with a multidimensional flavor profile. Han Dynasty, Philly’s original foray into the Sichuan Revolution, has got to be the choice. The cumin-heavy dishes are dry and bitter, like the film’s comedic sensibility, and also spicy, like Gopnik’s next-door neighbor who sunbathes topless, the alluring Mrs. Samsky.

The famous Dan Dan Noodles (which may be ordered without the pork) are slippery like Sy Abelman and nutty like Gopnik’s unemployable brother (played pitch-perfectly by Richard Kind), who’s working on a secret treatise called the “Mentaculous” that turns out to be detached from every known reality. Add some extra chili flakes for those relatives who are

See Chinese, Page 30

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CHINESE

Continued from Page 29

geniuses in the only place that really matters, their own minds.

Lastly, and this is most important, make sure to order the large helping and finish it all, thereby ensuring the onset of that distinctly Jewish brand of self-loathing that permeates "A Serious Man" and ultimately makes the food, and the film, most worthwhile.

Eric Schucht: Chow mein/"Eight Crazy Nights" (2002). This combination seems fitting as they're both cheaply thrown together messes. Like chow mein, "Eight Crazy Nights" is something few seek out. You don't ask for it, but accept it anyway. The Jewish people don't really have a lot of options when it comes to Chanukah flicks, especially the animated kind, so beggars can't be choosers.

I'm a fan of the stir-fry travesty because I refuse to be an adult and make my own decisions. It's a consistent, consumable dish that's easy to order, easy to find and it gets the job done. Basic filler. The same can be said of the Adam Sandler musical "comedy" with bad voice acting, offensive stereotypes and overused toilet humor.

Not sure if you'll feel the spirit of the season after watching, but you're sure to feel something. Oh, and make sure to eat out of a to-go box because it's a crime to class up anything that's just thrown on the living room TV for background noise as you think about your life choices.

Selah Maya Zighelboim: Orange chicken/"An American Tail" (1986). I love Pixar, so I will happily set myself up in front of an animated children's flick this Christmas.

And what better to go along with a children's movie than a dish surely meant for children? Something sweet, sticky and colorful?

For that reason, I'm pairing "An American Tail" with orange chicken.

Though it's not a Pixar movie, "An American Tail" makes for a great winter watch, full of Jewish themes. It's a cute musical film about a Russian Jewish mouse named Fievel Mousekewitz. It opens on a scene of the Mousekevitz family celebrating Chanukah, but that celebration is interrupted by cats, who, representing Cossacks, destroy the village and their home. The family immigrates to the United States, but on the way there, Fievel get separated and

goes on an adventure to try and reunite with them.

There are also some snapshots of humans that might intrigue the adult part of your brain, such as a scene of people going through immigration at Ellis Island.

Andy Gotlieb: Any kind of lo mein/“Goodfellas” (1990). My favorite movie (that and “Trading Places”) features a lot of food-heavy scenes, whether the boys were at the Bamboo Lounge, the Copa, Tommy DeVito’s mother’s house, Henry Hill’s house, Paulie Cicero’s backyard or a federal penitentiary, among other locales.

It’s actually kind of surprising the mobsters didn’t all die from heart attacks before getting whacked, considering the amount of sausage, pasta and other Italian delicacies they consumed.

I couldn’t really think of a Chinese equivalent to what the gangsters were eating, but lo mein basically is spaghetti, so there you go. And lo mein is hard to screw up — even the skeevi-est Chinese takeout joint can make a tasty version.

It’s also a fairly safe bet that “Goodfellas” will run multiple times over the holiday season. ●



▲ Selah Maya Zighelboim recommends orange chicken while watching the classic animated film “An American Tale.”
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JESSE BERNSTEIN | JE STAFF

The thing about doing good for others is that there is an inexhaustible supply of opportunities and, of course, others. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, there are people who need helping and a lot of different ways to help them.

That December has become a season to “give back” in the United States has much to do with Christmas and little to do with Chanukah. But you’d be hard pressed to find a bad time to recommit to service, so why not do it around the festival of lights?

This year, we have a couple of lesser-known options for giving a helping hand to those who need it.

JEVS Human Services offers a program called 3 Cups of Coffee, which just celebrated its first anniversary. First created by Pennsylvania Women Work, it is a short-term mentorship program designed to help job-seeking individuals connect with professionals in their chosen field for job advice and networking assistance. Professionals fill out a simple application to be connected to prospective mentees. After they’re paired up, based on mutual career interests, the two meet up for three one-hour coffee meetings over six weeks. Better yet, lucky mentor-mentee pairs who find themselves near a Saxby’s can get a free coffee for their efforts.



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▲ 3 Cups of Coffee pairs job-seeking individuals with professionals in their field. Photo by Linette Kielinski

In the year that the organization has operated the JEVS banner, 16 pairs have been made, according to Chris Richter, marketing communications manager at JEVS. The barrier for entry is low, and the time commitment is, too.

“You don’t have to have been around a really long time to be a mentor,” Richter said.

Another way to pitch in this Chanukah season is KleinLife of Northeast Philadelphia’s annual Adopt-A-Family program.

The program, like 3 Cups of Coffee, pairs someone to give with someone who needs giving. Interested families and businesses are invited to “adopt” another family that can’t afford to purchase Chanukah gifts. Each year, participating volunteer families donate toys, clothing and gift items to deserving families.

This year, said Inna Gulko, director of support services at KleinLife of Northeast Philadelphia, seven or eight families have already been “adopted” through the Adopt-A-Family program, with contributions from individual families, private donors, synagogues, sisterhoods and the American Heritage Credit Union. Still, there is plenty of time left for interested parties to help brighten another family’s Chanukah when they need it most.

“It always feels great to cheer them up, and help them during the holiday season,” Gulko said. ●

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▲ From left: Amy Anderson; Inna Gulko, director of support services for KleinLife; and Melissa Garman Photo by American Heritage Federal Credit Union

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