

# Be the light:Lighting the Menorah Community event for Unity

By Cooper Drummond

Chanukah is celebrated by millions of people around the world during the December holiday season each year.

The Chabad of Orange County, based in the Village of Goshen, annually hosts a community menorah lighting festival on the first night of the eight day celebration in the village portion of Church Park.

Antisemitism has increased

*are not going to stop being Jewish. The Jewish people have been around for thousands of years and we are going to continue with God's help."*

*"People seem to be voicing it, whether it's online, YouTube or out in public," said attendee Mitchell Weintraub. "They feel very comfortable saying negative things. A lot of people are questioning their faith and they believe in electronics and gizmos, and it is taking them away from whether you are a Muslim or a Jew. I am a Jew and I am also Christian, and I have Muslim friends. It is all about being kind and peaceful, and empathetic to everybody fully. That is the bottom line for me."*

Earlier in the day of the menorah lighting, there was an alleged shooting at an Albany synagogue. This happened in a city just two hours north of Goshen.

*"We are aware of the security threats," said Village of Goshen Police Chief James Watt. He continued by saying, "we provide security for this every year. This year had a much more heightened sense of awareness of potential threats. We did take some extra security precautions. I have officers here in uniform and also plainclothes. We did some preliminary sweeps of the facility at the time. And we do some extra intelligence work in advance."*

*"With everything else going on? Our answer to that is another menorah lighting. You just got to continue, that is it. It is important no one should be afraid to be happy, light a Chanukah menorah and just have joy," said Rabbi Borenstein.*

*"I am a Jew, and this is my holiday. We get together and celebrate life. Jews are about life," said Weintraub.*

The flyer for this year's menorah lighting headlined it as a "community unity event" and "a night to combat antisemitism." Borenstein took time to speak about the rise in Jewish hate to all of the people in attendance. He also had several Goshen community leaders voice their concerns and public support.

*"I think we need to love our fellow employees and fellow citizens," said Goshen's former Town Supervisor and current Town Councilman Doug Bloomfield. "I am so upset about this antisemitism in our nation today. On behalf of the town board and all the employees of the Town of Goshen, I want to wish you a very Happy Chanukah, and a wonderful and prosperous year ahead," he concluded.*

*"Our office is here for you 365 days a year," said a representative from New York State Senator James Skoufis of the 42nd district. "We are always here. So please be in touch."*

The night had a variety of activities for the community. Before and after Borenstein's speech, there was music to dance to, latkes, donuts and hot cocoa. Additionally, once the music began playing again, the menorah was lit to resemble the first night of Hannukah. The Goshen Fire Department raised a bucket from their ladder truck to raise Rabbi Borenstein and Orange County Sheriff Paul Arteta, drafted to help by the Rabbi, to do this.

From there, a thousand pieces of gelt were thrown from that spot for children to gather from the air. Kids were also allowed to visit certain stores on main street with activities, crafts and gifts just prior to the celebration in the park.

*"The job of any nation is to take care of the children. That is the future, that is the power, so we have to educate the children right," said Borenstein.*



since the Hamas-Israel War began on October 7th. According to the Anti-Defamation League, between October 7th and October 23rd, there were 190 antisemitic incidents directly linked to the war reported in the United States. During that same period in 2022, there were only four antisemitic incidents specifically related to Israel.

*"Acts of antisemitism are everywhere," said Rabbi Meir Borenstein of the Chabad of Orange County. "It has got to stop and it will stop, God-willing. It is very sad; people call me that they are getting yelled at if they have a mezuzah on their door or if they are noticeably Jewish, but we*

