



FROM THE DERHER ARCHIVE

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Compilation for Kahoot game

Chanukah Live

Chanukah has always been a time to simply focus on family, but the Rebbe changed that by making it a time to spread the light of Chanukah to everyone around the world.

One of the Rebbe's big ideas was to have public Menorah lightings, and Chassidim and Shluchim everywhere worked hard to bring this idea to life. Some organized public lightings, others visited homes, and some went out into the streets to make sure every Jew could see the light of Chanukah.

In the winter of 5734, Rabbi Avrohom Shemtov led the first public Menorah lighting at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, near the Liberty Bell. This lighting became an annual tradition and inspired many similar Menorahs worldwide. At first, a smaller Menorah was used at the Liberty Bell; however, in 5739, Rabbi Shemtov arranged for a huge 32-foot Menorah to be made, a symbol of how the Menorah should be grand and inspiring.

By Chanukah 5750, guided by the Rebbe's constant urge to utilize the newest technologies for purposes of Yiddishkeit, Rabbi Shemtov had an even bigger idea that, back then, was still new and big. He wanted to link Chanukah lightings in multiple cities worldwide at the same time with a video broadcast using satellite technology. This way, Menorah lightings in places like Philadelphia, Washington, and Israel could be seen at the same time, and people around the world could experience the Rebbe's Chanukah celebration.

As the idea formulated in his head, it occurred to Rabbi Shemtov that in the present time, when Hashem's light can be felt most strongly where the Rebbe is found, this would be like the ultimate *“Aliya L'regel”*— short of coming in person. A worldwide hookup, which could also be viewed on any personal television, would show Chanukah being celebrated in 770 together with four other public lightings around the world. The broadcast would allow Jews everywhere to not only see the Rebbe's Chanukah but also be seen by the Rebbe.

Rabbi Shemtov was nervous about how to make such a huge broadcast work, but when he wrote to the Rebbe with details of how the project would work, he got an answer that the Rebbe would change his schedule and join the program in person!

A team of Shluchim and Bochorim worked hard to make this broadcast a reality. Rabbi Hillel Dovid Krinsky, founder of JEM, helped lead the efforts, and together with others, they made sure everything would go smoothly. They planned the broadcast carefully, with cameras, satellite dishes, and a control center to make it all happen, and updated the Rebbe with reports on what was going on.

The program was unique, and great thought was given to each detail. Thousands of children from the New York area would gather inside 770 for a Tzivos Hashem rally. At the same time, the participating events being held elsewhere would also take place.

Inside the main shul of 770, an extensive camera crew and numerous screens were put up everywhere. To broadcast, huge satellite dishes needed to be rented and brought to each location. In Crown Heights, they were parked on Eastern Parkway in front of 770.

On the day of the broadcast, the team worked for hours to prepare 770. Only children, teachers, and a few others were allowed to be in the main shul for the event, while Anash watched on large screens around Crown Heights. Bochorim squeezed into the Ezras Noshim of 770 to witness the proceedings, yet when the main shul in 770 overflowed with children, they were made to leave to give space for more children to participate.

The broadcast was shown live in many locations, including large screens at the Oholei Torah ballroom and then a jumbo screen outside 770. In the small shul of 770, two screens stood. One played the broadcast while the other streamed footage from the camera of Reb Chaim Boruch Halbershtam, which was constantly focused on the Rebbe. Two additional screens were placed in the Ezras Noshim of 770.

When the Rebbe entered the shul, the program began with Mincha, and after that, the 12 Pesukim were recited. The broadcast showed the Menorah lightings from different places around the world, and each location got a chance to be seen by the Rebbe. The Chanukah Live team put in much effort to ensure that every location taking part would have a substantial moment on the screen at least three times throughout the broadcast. Each place would be seen by the Rebbe at least for one

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Posuk, during their Menorah lighting, and while they were singing Haneirois Hallolu. People everywhere felt the joy of seeing themselves on screen and being part of the Rebbe’s Chanukah celebration.

Afterwards they said the Pesukim with global unity. The Rebbe would watch the monitors very closely and often repeated the words of the Pesukim after the children. At the end of the recital of the Pesukim, everyone burst into singing “We Want Moshiach Now.”

At this point, the Menorahs would be lit at each location, one at a time. Usually, the one who lit the Menorah, or another individual standing together with him in each location, would say a few words and end off with a Brocho to the Rebbe.

All through Chanukah Live each year, Chassidim recognized a rare sense of peace in the Rebbe’s face. It was clear that the Rebbe had great pleasure from the entire program. Moreover, there were particular moments when it seemed the Rebbe’s face would light up with joy.

Each year, the tens of thousands of people that gathered at the Eiffel Tower in France would give broad smiles from the Rebbe. During the first Chanukah Live, when a hookup showed Jews in Moscow celebrating Chanukah freely for the first time in decades, the Rebbe showed sheer delight.

Once the Menorah was lit in all locations, concluding with the kindling of the spectacular Menorah in 770, Haneirois Hallolu was sung in tandem throughout the world. As the participants at each location would see themselves on the screen, they would often excitedly wave and jump out of great joy at being seen by the Rebbe.

After the Menorahs were all lit, the Rebbe gave a Sicha, speaking to everyone around the world. His words were translated into English, and a summary was given to the crowd in 770. The Rebbe often connected the event to the importance of giving Tzedakah and even distributed money to people as part of the celebration.

The broadcast ended with a heartfelt Birchas Kohanim and a special Brocho for the Rebbe, hoping that he would derive only Nachas from all his Chassidim, and that he would speedily lead us all to Yerushalayim with the revelation of Moshiach.

Every year, Chanukah Live brought Chassidim together, and it became a special way to celebrate the light of Chanukah and share it with the entire world.

Chanukah Gelt

Why do we give Chanukah Gelt?

The exact reasoning for the minhag of Chanukah gelt has always been a mystery, as the Rebbe pointed out a number of times. So why do we do it?

Minhag Yisroel Practiced by the Rebbeim

The Rebbe would often emphasize the fact that it is a minhag practiced by the Rebbeim, which means that it has the power of a minhag Yisroel and is therefore part of Torah. Furthermore: being that this practice was shared with the public, it has the authority of divrei chachomim, and by fulfilling it we connect with the Rebbeim!

In addition, various hints for the practice were given by the Rebbe and his father Horav Levi Yitzchak.

WHO?

It should be given to sons and daughters, before and after marriage. (The Rebbe would always cite the example of the Frierdiker Rebbe, who gave Chanukah gelt to his adult daughters and sons-in-law, and once commented, “He knew that I would make a *tumel* about it...”)

It is also given to grandchildren, even though they already receive Chanukah gelt from their parents.

In addition to the parents, other members of the family should also give Chanukah gelt. At least one year, the Rebbe said that children should give amongst themselves as well. The Rebbe himself would give Chanukah gelt to children during rallies and encouraged others to gather children and do the same; and, at least one year, to soldiers being visited on *mivtzoim* as well.

WHEN?

In *Hayom Yom*, the Rebbe writes that the Tzemach Tzedek (and the earlier Rebbeim) would give Chanukah gelt on the fourth or fifth night of Chanukah.

In 5748, the Rebbe encouraged that Chanukah gelt should be given every night of Chanukah. The Rebbe explained that the reason the Rebbeim only gave once over

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Chanukah was so that it would retain its novelty and wouldn't become routine. However, the Rebbe said, because the darkness of *golus* has intensified, specifically in the area of *chinuch*, we should now give Chanukah gelt every night.

To fulfill the directive of the Rebbeim to give on the fourth or fifth night and to preserve the novelty, one should give extra on the fourth or fifth night—double or triple as much as the other nights.

The Rebbe continued encouraging nightly Chanukah gelt in the following years, and, at the very least, on two nights of Chanukah. The Rebbe said that one can (and should) complete the giving of Chanukah gelt on the last day of Chanukah, even after *Maariv* is over.

TZEDAKAH

The Rebbe spoke many times throughout the years that Chanukah gelt should be used as an opportunity to educate children on the importance of giving *tzedakah* from their own money (especially since Chanukah has a special connection to *tzedakah*, as the Tzemach Tzedek explains).

All of a child's needs are taken care of by his parents, so the main use of his money is for mitzvos, first and foremost *tzedakah*. When a child receives more money, especially money that he hadn't expected to receive, it is in order to give more *tzedakah*.

COINS

In later years, the Rebbe would hold rallies for children every Chanukah, during which he would give the chaperones Chanukah gelt to distribute to the children. The Chanukah gelt that the Rebbe gave was almost always in the form of coins (though this wasn't unique to Chanukah gelt, as the Rebbe would distribute coins for children at other rallies as well).

During one Chanukah rally, the Rebbe gave fascinating insight into this practice:^[1]

The Rebbe pointed out that, by nature, children value coins more than paper money, and he explained that this is a reflection of Torah: in Torah, too, coins have more value than paper money. To effect a *halachic* transaction (like marriage), one can only use coins, which have inherent value, not paper money, which is really only a note from the government promising that it is backed by something.

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The Rebbe learns a lesson from this: The *avoda* of a Yid is to make the world into a *dirah b’tachtonim* for Hashem, and he “pays” for it with gold and silver, by dedicating his *ratzon* (will) and *ta’anug* (enjoyment) to Torah and mitzvos. But it isn’t enough to use paper money—it isn’t enough to make a *hachlata* and write down a promise that something will be done; one must use coins with inherent value—one must actually do it with coins!

STORY

It was the first night of Chanukah 5728, a cold and snowy night. As usual, the Rebbe davened Maariv with the minyan, and when it came to the singing of *haneiros halalu*, the Rebbe opened the door of the shul so that the shlucha to Milan, Mrs. Garelik, could hear the singing together with her daughter.

When the Rebbe came out, he gave a dollar to the girl and said, in Yiddish, “*This is Chanukah gelt for you.*” When their older son, Levi Yitzchak, came out of the zal, the Rebbe gave him Chanukah gelt as well.

Then the Rebbe put his hand in his pocket, took out another four coins, and said, “*This is for the rest of the children who are in Pittsburgh [with their grandfather, Rabbi Sholom Posner].*”

Public Menorah Lightings

From the time Chazal established the mitzvah of kindling the Menorah, the objective has been to publicize the nes of Chanukah to the outside, illuminating the world around us. The Menorah is expected to be placed in the open - על פתח ביתו מבחוץ -

Chassidus explains that the light of the Chanukah Menorah is even stronger than that of the Beis Hamikdash, It has the special Koach to push away and transform the darkness of galus with Hashem’s infinite light - והווי' יג' חשכי -

But it would take more than two thousand years for this goal to be truly realized, when the Rebbe’s mitvza Chanukah actually brought the light of the Menorah to the public in a way never seen before.

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In 5734 the Rebbe launched mitvza Chanukah with a mission: that every Yid should have a chance to light a Menorah. The Rebbe explained that a Menorah shines its light for everyone who sees it, even non-Jews. The Rebbe wanted the campaign to be done with great shturem, making sure at least one Menorah was lit in every home. The Rebbe also encouraged children to light their own Menorahs.

Thanks to mitvza Chanukah, millions of Yidden and non-Jews now know about Chanukah. Today, huge public Menorah lightings happen worldwide, with thousands of people celebrating together.

One of the unique aspects of mitvza Chanukah is the public Menorah lightings. From the Kremlin, to Manhattan, to the White House lawn, public Menorahs are a symbol of Jewish pride the world over. In cities and towns on all corners of the globe, Jews gather every year to celebrate Chanukah with the lighting of a large Menorah towering above the celebrants.

These giant Menorah lightings have come to symbolize Lubavitch’s fearless mode of hafatza, featured in magazines and newspapers worldwide. However, this global impact didn’t start all at once; it began with a few small Menorah lightings arranged

by shluchim for their local communities, and they hardly could have imagined what it would turn into.

As mentioned, one of the first Menorah lightings was in front of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, in 5735, arranged by Rabbi Avrohom Shemtov. That first year, he lit a small Menorah that he managed to put together with a few bochurim. By the following year, a bigger event was prepared with a larger Menorah.

As Rabbi Shemtov was beginning to light up the East Coast, Rabbi Chaim Drizin of San Francisco had a similar idea: to light a huge wooden Menorah, 22 feet tall, in the city’s Union Square. It was on the first night of Chanukah, 5736, when Chabad’s first large public Menorah was kindled on the West Coast.

Rabbi Drizin wasn’t expecting much of a crowd for such a public celebration of the miracle of Chanukah. To his utter amazement, over one thousand people came to watch the Menorah being lit in San Francisco’s downtown!

The World’s Largest Menorah

Perhaps one of the most famous Menorahs in the world is the Menorah in Manhattan on Fifth Avenue, and it is definitely one of the tallest, towering at thirty-two feet.

Rabbi Shmuel Butman related:

“It was shortly after the Rebbe’s heart attack on Shemini Atzeres 5738, and I was thinking to myself, ‘What can I do to give the Rebbe nachas?’ After much thought, I had an idea: I would build the biggest Menorah in the world—and put it up right in the middle of Manhattan.”

Although it was shortly after Shemini Atzeres and the Rebbe was still unwell in his room, Rabbi Butman received many answers from the Rebbe encouraging this idea.

Working with local officials, Rabbi Butman got special permission to put up the Menorah at the extremely central location of Manhattan’s Fifth Avenue. The Mayor of New York at the time was Ed Koch, and Rabbi Butman arranged that Koch himself would participate in the event and light the Menorah. Every year since, tens of thousands of people join the Menorah lighting in Manhattan, and it is known as the biggest Menorah in the world.

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Interestingly, on one occasion, the Rebbetzin made a special trip to Manhattan to see the Menorah.

The Rebbe always made sure to say that the Menorah must be lit in its proper time. To light the Menorah on Friday afternoon and still make it home on time for Shabbos, Rabbi Butman would take a helicopter from Manhattan to Crown Heights!

However, the story of the Menorah in Manhattan doesn't stop there.

In 5747, a few years after the Rebbe had explained that the proper design of the branches of the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash were diagonal -not circular- as depicted by the Rambam, Rabbi Butman decided to build a new Menorah according to its original and accurate design. He recruited world-famous artist Mr. Yaakov Agam to design it. Rabbi Butman had Mr. Agam prepare a three-foot model, which he brought to the Rebbe to get the Rebbe's input and approval. The model stayed on the Rebbe's desk for three days!

When Mr. Agam went by the Rebbe for dollars on the second day of Chanukah, the Rebbe thanked him for designing the Menorah according to the shita of the Rambam and spoke with him warmly about his work.

Joined by the President

Another major development in the public Menorah campaign was in 5740, when Rabbi Avrohom Shemtov arranged for a massive Menorah to be built and put up on the White House Lawn. To add even more to the *pirsumei nissa*, they invited President Jimmy Carter to join the lighting event!

Many doubted that the president would actually show up because, at the time, due to the Iranian Hostage Crisis, Carter had not left the White House for more than three months! Up until the last minute, his participation wasn't confirmed.

Yet, to the shock of all, the president left the White House for the first time after 100 days to participate in the Menorah lighting ceremony. Carter spent much time at the event, spoke to the gathered crowd, and lit the shamash of a small Menorah (the small Menorah had been given to Carter as a present).

Afterwards, the Rebbe wrote a warm letter of thanks to Carter, expressing “genuine gratification at your personal participation in the ceremony of lighting the Chanukah Candelabra in front of the White House.”

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The tradition of lighting the Menorah near the White House lawn continues to this day and is watched by millions of people across the globe.

Almost every year, beginning in 5745, a delegation from American Friends of Lubavitch travels to Washington and meets with the president in the Oval Office in honor of Chanukah. The Rebbe received great satisfaction when Rabbi Krinsky relayed that a picture of one of these meetings had been released, in which one can see the Lubavitch delegation presenting a silver Menorah to President Reagan.

Nowadays, many shluchim hold their own similar events together with their state governors, mayors, and local dignitaries.

As per the Rebbe’s request, following Chanukah 5746 a book was compiled chronicling Menorah lightings arranged by shluchim across the globe, titled Let There Be Light.

Overcoming Opposition

Shining a whole new light on the importance of the public Menorah lightings are the Rebbe’s letters written in response to the opposition they faced.

Although today it is an obvious symbol of Chanukah, public Menorahs were initially met with some pushback, often by secular Jewish organizations who were not comfortable with the public display of Jewish pride.

The argument these groups often had against public Menorahs was the misunderstanding that placing a ‘religious symbol’ on public grounds was a violation of the First Amendment. Another argument they sometimes said was that expressing Judaism in public could lead non-Jews to express their religion in public, which would push non Jewish religion on others as well.

But under these excuses and arguments was really the issue that many Jews were simply embarrassed by such a public and proud display of Yiddishkeit. It’s something they weren’t used to and they felt uncomfortable with it.

The Rebbe spoke about how this itself is one of the key messages in the public Menorah lightings: to get “a sense of pride in [their] Yiddishkeit and the realization that there is no reason really in this free country to hide one’s Jewishness,” and that Yiddishkeit is nothing to be embarrassed of.

Stories of Light over Darkness

In 5741, Rabbi Yisroel Brod, then a shliach in Bergen County, N.J., arranged for a large Menorah to be set in front of the Bergen County Courthouse in Hackensack, N.J.

“It was beautiful,” recalls Rabbi Brod. “It was a perfect location. Every night we would get picked up by a cherry picker to light the Menorah. We had people from the local Jewish organization there, and everyone had a wonderful time.”

“I was so innocent; I had no idea that people would have an issue with it,” he relates. “So I was shocked when, during the following summer, I got a call from a high-up member of the Jewish Federation of Teaneck asking that we don’t set up such a Menorah in Teaneck, where I was based.”

They explained that they had their own way of doing things and were not interested in a public Menorah. When they heard that Rabbi Brod was going to put one up anyway, they decided to write a letter to the Rebbe to express their opinion.

The Rebbe replied to them by writing two letters on the topic in which he strongly defended the concept of public Menorah lightings.

Concerning the legality of placing a religious symbol on public grounds, the Rebbe mentioned the Menorahs that were put up in major cities, as well as the Menorah on the White House lawn! In addition, the Rebbe explained that failing to express Judaism in public could backfire with negative results. Additionally, if Jews refrained from putting a Menorah in public, it could hardly deter the general goyishe population from expressing their religion in public.

The Rebbe even wrote that it’s hard to imagine that after all we’ve been through as Jews, some Jews would still entertain the idea that by making themselves as quiet and hidden as possible, concealing their Jewishness, they think they’d gain favor with their gentile neighbors.

Regarding the importance of displaying a Menorah, the Rebbe wrote:

“Now to come to the essential point. Why is it so important for Jews to have a Chanukah Menorah displayed publicly? Experience has shown that the Chanukah Menorah displayed publicly during the eight days of Chanukah has been an inspiration to many, many Jews and evoked in them a spirit of identity with their Jewish people and the Jewish way of life. To many others, it has brought a sense of

pride in their Yiddishkeit and the realization that there is no reason really in this free country to hide one’s Jewishness, as if it were contrary or hurtful to American life and culture. On the contrary, it is fully in keeping with the American national slogan ‘e pluribus unum’ and the fact that American culture has been enriched by the thriving ethnic cultures which contributed very much, each in its own way, to American life both materially and spiritually.”

The Rebbe continued:

“Certainly, Jews are not in the proselytizing business. The Chanukah Menorah is not intended to, and can in no way, bring us converts to Judaism. But it can, and does, bring many Jews back to their Jewish roots. I personally know of scores of such Jewish returnees, and I have good reason to believe that in recent years, hundreds, even thousands, of Jews experience a kindling of their inner Jewish spark by the public kindling of the Chanukah Menorah in their particular city and in the Nation’s capital etc., as publicized by the media.”

These powerful letters were used by many shluchim throughout the years to formulate the Lubavitch position on public Menorahs.

Getting back to the Menorah in Teaneck: Although Rabbi Brod’s bid for a public Menorah in Teaneck was rejected by the local council that year, he successfully arranged for Menorahs to be lit in many other locations in New Jersey, including the State Capital in Trenton.

The following summer, Rabbi Brod met with Rabbi Moshe Herson to discuss plans for the upcoming Chanukah. There were two options: either continue pursuing the Menorah in Teaneck (despite the opposition at the local town hall) or concentrate efforts on having a Menorah put up in Trenton.

Rabbi Herson wrote to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe disregarded the option about Teaneck and agreed that they move forward with their efforts in Trenton. The Rebbe also instructed how to proceed with placing Menorahs in other cities.

At the time, they understood the maane to say that the Rebbe was telling them to be careful and try to put up Menorahs only in places where they knew they had a fair chance of success.

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Afterward, Rabbi Brod arranged for Menorahs to be displayed in other locations around New Jersey. By 5744, his "empire of Menorahs" expanded to 15 stately structures standing proudly in front of town halls all across Bergen County (three municipalities—Fort Lee, Oakland, and Hillside—even put up their own).

Over the years, many other shlichim had to deal with similar controversies within their communities regarding public Menorahs.

No Need to Be Ashamed

In 5742, Rabbi Yosef Landa, who was sent on shlichus to St. Louis the year before, decided to build a Menorah on the large plaza next to the St. Louis County Government Center. Working with a local fabricator, he built a beautiful 15-foot structure.

Rabbi Landa got permission from the county to put up the Menorah, but just as he was about to do so, an official came out and said they couldn't allow it until the county lawyers reviewed it.

Surprised, Rabbi Landa immediately called mazkirus and asked for a brocha from the Rebbe. Within an hour, he got the news that everything was fine, and he could put up the Menorah as planned.

The lighting was a success, with a County executive attending, and Rabbi Landa received positive feedback. But later that week, some people from the Jewish community started complaining. A letter in a local Jewish newspaper said the Menorah on public property violated the separation of religion and state. Rabbi Landa wrote back, explaining his position.

As far as Rabbi Landa was concerned, the entire episode, both the event and the controversy that followed it, seemed like a small matter.

Soon after Chanukah, Rabbi Landa traveled to New York for a wedding. When he came to 770, he was surprised to hear that Rabbi Groner was looking for him. Unsure of what to expect, Rabbi Landa was amazed to learn that the Rebbe had written a maane for him, asking: "מה הי' סוף דבר במיזורי?"—What ended up happening in Missouri? This was a tremendous kiruv, especially for a young shliach.

Of course, Rabbi Landa immediately sat down and wrote a detailed report to the Rebbe, including the complaints from the community.

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Shortly afterward, Rabbi Landa received a lengthy response from the Rebbe with a general horo’a that had directives for other shluchim as well:

"The shluchim, sh’yichyu, who are in a similar situation to the above should coordinate among themselves (with the participation of the one who knows the situation in Washington, Rabbi Avrohom Shemtov) to avoid contradictions [in their position about public Menorahs] from one another, and on the contrary, to help one another etc."

About Rabbi Landa’s letters to the newspapers, the Rebbe wrote:

"Fortunate is his lot and great is his merit that he was mikadesh Shem Shamayim and wasn’t embarrassed by the scoffers, and actually spread Yiddishkeit among tens of thousands of Yidden."

The Rebbe’s response amazed Rabbi Landa. He didn’t understand why he had merited such a powerful maane for what seemed like a small issue.

However, by the next year, Rabbi Landa began to understand. As Chanukah approached, and he planned to once again erect a public Menorah, things suddenly took a turn for the worse.

The Jewish establishment of the city, representing over forty organizations, united in fierce opposition to him, a young shliach who had only recently arrived. They campaigned against him, sending letters to local newspapers and setting meetings with the county to block the Menorah’s placement.

The controversy spread everywhere. The local Jewish newspaper made it front-page news and wrote editorials against the Menorah. Even the general media picked it up. They said it was about the separation of religion and state, but really, many people were simply uncomfortable with the boldness of the public Menorah, which showed Jewish pride. Some called Rabbi Landa an “import from Brooklyn” who was disrupting their traditions.

Understandably, the controversy was very hard on Rabbi Landa. He finally understood why he had received such a tremendously encouraging response from the Rebbe the previous year—it had been a preparation for the challenges he was now facing.

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While trying to deal with the opposition in the newspapers and around the city, Rabbi Landa relied on the letters the Rebbe had written to the community in Teaneck to help guide his response.

Although so many people stood against him, the decision ultimately came down from the county: "Didan Notzach!"—the Menorah would go up, albeit for only a few days.

Afterward, those who had fought the Menorah were deeply upset. They considered themselves the Jewish establishment and felt that a young rabbi had come into town and shook up their traditions.

But then something incredible happened. Rabbi Landa shared a remarkable story:

“It was the last day of Chanukah that year. Mayor Ed Koch of NYC happened to be in St. Louis to speak at the annual meeting of the local Jewish Federation, held over a Sunday brunch at an upscale hotel. Several hundred attendees, including many of the leaders opposing the Menorah, were present.

“After his speech, Mayor Koch took questions. Someone nervously asked Koch, as a Jewish mayor, how he dealt with religious symbols on public property, specifically the placement of Menorahs. It was obviously a very personal and heavy topic to many people in the crowd.

“The room went silent as Koch responded directly: ‘I have no problem whatsoever with a privately-funded Menorah on public property. I think it’s absolutely wonderful. I’m proud to say that we have one in New York City at Fifth Avenue and Central Park.’”

Mayor Koch continued:

“Let me tell you what else we do in New York. The Menorah is in Manhattan. The people who light the Menorah are the Lubavitchers. They live in Brooklyn, so when they light the Menorah in Manhattan late on Friday afternoon, close to Shabbos, we provide them with a helicopter and fly them back to Brooklyn so they can get home in time for Shabbos!”

The audience was stunned, and needless to say, the controversy in St. Louis quieted down majorly after that.

When a member of mazkirus mentioned Mayor Koch’s comments to the Rebbe, the Rebbe smiled broadly.

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Tody, the flames of the Chanukah Menorah continue to inspire millions of Jews, reigniting their connection to their roots and their Yiddishkeit.

As the Rebbe wrote in one of his letters:

"I personally know of scores of such Jewish returnees, and I have good reason to believe that in recent years, hundreds, even thousands, of Jews experience a kindling of their inner Jewish spark by the public kindling of the Chanukah Menorah..."