

the Maccabees....We light the candles every night...recite the blessings, sing the songs, play chess, go to parties and dance the hora.”

Picking up on the party theme, Emily Solis-Cohen’s popular *Hanukkah: The Feast of Lights* offered detailed suggestions of costumes, props, puppet shows, and dances for such characters as “The Top,” “The Pancakes,” and “The Spirit of Giving.” The Jewish ritual guidebook *The Jewish Home Beautiful* also designated the holiday as a “period for mirth and for spreading of good-will” and championed the merits of a home “bright with candle lights and gay with parties and the exchange of gifts.”

The consumption of appropriate holiday foods contributed to the merriment. Sharing popularity with latkes (potato pancakes) were “Maccabean sandwiches,” composed of either tuna fish or egg salad and shaped to resemble a bite-sized Maccabee warrior; and “Menorah fruit salad,” a composition of cream cheese and fruit that, when molded, resembled the ritual object.

By the 1950s, American Jews no

longer had to dread the “cruel month” of December. Chanukah’s accoutrements had grown to include paper decorations, greeting cards, napkins, wrapping paper, ribbons, and phonograph records. And in the years following World War II, the outside world increasingly freighted Chanukah with the same cultural and social significance as Christmas, yoking the two together in demonstration of America’s “cultural oneness.” Public school educators in particular convened a “holiday assembly” on a “compromise date” in December in which a Christmas tree and a “Menorah candle” as well as the singing of Chanukah hymns and Christmas carols figured prominently.

As for those American Jews in search of a more authentically Jewish pretext for the celebration of Chanukah, they did not have to look too far afield. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 provided the rationale: brave warriors of the newborn state were the modern Maccabees.

Thus did a Jewish festival of dimin-

ishing popularity in the 1880s rebound on the American landscape.

“It all goes to show,” observed one suburban rabbi fascinated by the degree of attention his congregants lavished on Chanukah, “that if you work away at it, you can revive a holiday.”

Light one candle for the cultural ingenuity and determination of American Jewry. □

#### REFORM RESOURCES

- For the Chanukah blessings, frequently asked questions, adult learning and social justice programs, a Jewish calendar, plus ways to engage children in the holiday, visit <http://urj.org/holidays/chanukah/>.
- For Chanukah-themed books and music visit <http://www.urjbook-sandmusic.com/>
- For information on and/or assistance with the “December Dilemma,” contact the Union’s Department of Outreach and Synagogue Community, [www.urj.org/outreach](http://www.urj.org/outreach)

## Rebel With a Cause

*continued from page 52*

our task was to locate a Friedman. The telephone directory was not much help, as Friedman is the eighteenth most common name in Israel. So we hired a historian, who not only found a document confirming that Pavel was killed in Auschwitz in 1942, but also discovered, through the Terezin archives, that he was not a young boy as everyone believed, but a 22-year-old man. Not only that—Pavel was married at the Terezin concentration camp to a woman named Adina Schnitzer, who survived, settled in Israel, and now at age 84 lives on Kibbutz Ginnegar. The Klaus and I went to meet Adina Schnitzer, and she told us that Pavel’s mother was not Jewish. So it turns out that perhaps the most famous Jewish boy of the Shoah was not a boy but a man, and not a Jew according to *halachah* (Jewish law). And, by the way, Adina added that Pavel taught Hebrew in the concentration camp; that’s how she became attracted to him. The first word he taught her was *ahava*, love—a word

which should figure prominently into Israel’s modern immigration policy.

### Did the butterflies catch on?

**T**hus far we’ve received more than 36,000 drawings. Some are from preschool students around the world. Some are unexpected—like the one from a boy named Adolf in Cologne, Germany and a thousand butterflies from Palestinian prisoners.

### What are your other initiatives?

**I**n 2006 we petitioned the Supreme Court, arguing that Rabbi Miri Gold, a Reform rabbi from Kibbutz Gezer, should be recognized as an official rabbi for the Gezer Municipality and be paid for the services she provides to her community, leading regular and holiday prayer services as well as performing b’nai mitzvah and funeral ceremonies. This may sound strange, asking for the government to pay the salary of the rabbi, but in Israel salaries for Orthodox rabbis are paid by the government. Because non-Orthodox rabbis are not recognized by the state, if you’re a

Reform Jew in Israel you have to pay double for religious services: first you pay taxes that go toward the salaries of Orthodox rabbis and their synagogue buildings; then you pay again for your unrecognized rabbi and your unrecognized building. We say, if the government uses tax dollars to pay for rabbis, then our rabbis should be similarly paid from state funds as a matter of equality. Currently Israel’s several hundred municipal rabbis are all Orthodox men, even though the vast majority of the population in almost all municipalities, including Gezer, are non-Orthodox. To strengthen our case, we have asked the government to supply us with a report that shows, for example, how many of the municipal rabbis on the government payroll actually live in the municipality they serve, what services they provide, to whom, and how often. We believe that in regions like Gezer where there are few Orthodox residents, these rabbis do very little, whereas Rabbi Gold is constantly busy meeting the spiritual needs of the local people.

*continued on page 60*