

Dear haverim,

As the first night of Hannukah begins to descend upon us I share the following reflection with you. A tradition that we have established over the course of the past few years, Rabbi Kushnick and I look forward to sharing a reflection with you in advance of each additional candle throughout our eight- day festival. Perhaps you will find our thoughts inspirational, to be used to initiate discussion with family and friends while kindling the lights on the “hannukiah.”

The year was 168BCE. The Greeks had ransacked the Temple in Jerusalem. They had forbidden the study of Torah and the practice of circumcision. Greek culture- Hellenism- was introduced throughout the land of Israel. Greek thought, architecture, athletic events, etc., all became the norm. The goal was to marginalize Jewish people and their practices.

Led by Mattityahu and, subsequently his five sons, this Hasmonean family was determined to preserve the Jewish way of life. Forming bands of warriors who took on the name Maccabee, they led the Jewish people in revolt against the Greek/Syrian oppressors. Their three- year assault of the invading forces ended in a short-lived victory for the Maccabees. The Temple was purged, re-dedicated (Hannukat HaBayit), and returned to its pristine condition.

This evening, 2180 years later remarkably, we, Jews gather across the world to mark this moment in history. We are commanded to place our “hannukiah” in the window of our homes to promote the miracle of Hannukah. The miracle, (“nes” in Hebrew) is most often identified with the story of the crude of oil lasting eight days. But, the greatest miracle may be the survival of the Jewish people. Despite unbelievable challenges across countless generations we have endured.

Today, despite our infinitesimal numbers we continue to bring so much light to the world. Our creativity and commitment to improving the lot of mankind continue to set the standard across the world. Today, amongst the many feelings we share as we gaze into our “hannukiah” we are overwhelmed by a sense of immense pride.

We feel the pride of a people whose dedication to the welfare of humanity will never be snuffed out- even by the most aggressive of naysayers. We share the pride for our people in the land of Israel who continue to stand up to the world with a moral fiber that is firm and inspirational. We are overcome by pride when we look at our children and realize that they are perpetuating a tradition that was nearly extinguished 75 years ago.

May the flickering lights of the “hannukiah” on this first night of Hannukah fill your home and your soul with pride- pride for the countless contributions the Jewish people have made to humankind. May each of us live in such a way that we will contribute to that extraordinary reservoir of accomplishments, striving to sanctify God’s name with our daily activities.

The Kushnick and Weinberg family join together in extending our warmest regards to you, our Anshai Torah family for a Hag Hannukat Sameah- a joyous festival of Hannukah.