

Dear haverim,

The year was 168 BCE. 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, theatre, athletic events, etc. all became the norm. The goal was to marginalize the Jewish people and their practices.

Led by Mattathias, 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 their 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 (Hanukkat HaBayit), and returned to its pristine condition.

As we light the first candle this evening we remember the sacrifices that many prior generations of Jews have made for us. Today, our Israeli family members continue to sacrifice for you and me, risking their lives to defend the Jewish people. We who live outside the land of Israel, in the "Galut," are compelled to do our part. We must defend the pride of the Jewish people. We must defend Israel's right to live in peace and determine its own future. We must educate ourselves so that we can become the most literate generation of Jewish people, enjoying exceptional blessings in the United States of America. May we peer into the candles on this first night, acknowledging our responsibility to ensure the fire of Jewish passion and Jewish pride remains alive and well in our generation. Jewish schools, Jewish camps, Jewish youth groups all assist us in our mission to ensure our children will become the next link in the Jewish people. Am Yisrael Hai.

The Weinberg and Kushnick families extend our warmest regards to our Anshai Torah family for a meaningful and light-filled festival of Hanukkah.

Hag Urim Sameah,

Rabbi Stefan J. Weinberg