



Flushing-Fresh Meadows Jewish Center
 193-10 Peck Avenue ✦ Flushing, New York 11365 (718) 357-5100

THE BULLETIN

Nov.-Dec., 2012 Kislev-Tevet, 5773
 Vol.10, No.3 Rabbi Gerald M. Solomon
Cantor Aaron Katz

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES, NOVEMBER

Friday, Nov.2	
Mincha/Maariv	5:30 PM
Candle-Lighting	5:32 PM
Saturday, Nov. 3	
Shabbat Services	
Parshat Vayera	9:00 AM
Shabbat ends	6:40 PM
Friday, Nov.9	
Mincha/Maariv	4:15 PM
Candle-Lighting	4:24 PM
Saturday, Nov. 10	
Shabbat Services	
Parshat Chayei Sara	9:00 AM
Shabbat ends	5:32 PM
Friday, Nov.16	
Mincha/Maariv	4:15 PM
Candle-Lighting	4:18 PM
Saturday, Nov. 17	
Shabbat Services	
Parshat Toldot	9:00 AM
Shabbat ends	5:26 PM
Friday, Nov.23	
Mincha/Maariv	4:00 PM
Candle-Lighting	4:14 PM
Saturday, Nov.24	
Shabbat Services	
Parshat Vayetztei	9:00 AM
Shabbat ends	5:22 PM
Friday, Nov.30	
Mincha/Maariv	4:00 PM
Candle-Lighting	4:11 PM
Saturday, Dec. 1	
Shabbat Services	
Parshat Vayishlach	9:00 AM
Shabbat ends	5:19 PM



COMING UP

Shabbat Dinner
Friday night, Nov 2
Services at 5:45 PM
Dinner at 6:30 PM

Kristallnacht
Memorial Program
Shabbat, November 10
During Services.

Veteran's Day Program
Sunday, November 11
At 2:00 PM
A film

To commemorate
The Sesquicentennial
Anniversary of the
War Between the States
"Jewish Soldiers in Blue
and Grey"

Chanukah Party
Wednesday
December 12 at 12:30

Watch flyers for these
events for more details

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES, DECEMBER

Friday, Nov 30	
Mincha/Maariv	4:00P.M.
Candle Lighting Time	4:11P.M.
Saturday, Dec.1	
Parashat Vayetzze	
Shabbat Services	9:00A.M.
Shabbat Ends	5:19P.M.
Friday, Dec.7	
Mincha/Maariv	4:00P.M.
Candle Lighting Time	4:10P.M.
Saturday, Dec.8	
Parashat Vayishlach	
Shabbat Services	9:00A.M.
Shabbat Ends	5:19P.M.
Friday, Dec.14	
Mincha/Maariv	4:00P.M.
Candle Lighting Time	4:11P.M.
Saturday, Dec.15	
Parashat Vayeshev	
Shabbat Services	9:00A.M.
Shabbat Ends	5:20P.M.
Friday, Dec 21	
Mincha/Maariv	3:45P.M.
Chanukah Candle Lighting Time	4:00P.M.
Shabbat Candle Lighting Time	4:14P.M.
Saturday, Dec.22	
Shabbat Chanukah-Parashat Miketz	
Shabbat Mevarchim Services	9:00A.M.
Shabbat Ends	5:23P.M.
Friday, Dec.28	
Mincha/Maariv	4:15P.M.
Candle Lighting Time	4:18P.M.
Saturday, Dec.29	
Parashat Vayigash	
Shabbat Services	9:00A.M.
Shabbat Ends	5:28P.M.

CENTER NEWS

THANK YOU

Thank you to all those who helped make our High Holy Day Services the dignified and meaningful experiences they were. Thank you to **Anita Bernstein** and **Albert Kimmelstiel** for their work on the honors and aliyot. Thank you to our Gabbaim **Leo Brown** and **Stuart Cohen** for handling the honors and aliyot at the services. Thank you to the Gabbaim of the Torah, **David End** and **David Nagan** who oversaw the reading of the Torahs and offered the appropriate "Mi Sh'berach" prayers. And, of course, thank you to our **Rabbi Gerald Solomon** and our **Cantor Aaron Katz**

We are pleased to report that the Flushing Fresh Meadows Jewish Center received a sizable donation from **Dr. Bert Green** in honor of our Co-President, Byron Dresner, for his good counsel and advice in a recent matter. Dr Green, as well as his sister, Dr. Jacqueline Green are children of Mary and Isadore Green, long time generous and devoted members of the original Flushing Jewish Center.

CONGRATULATIONS

To **Rabbi Solomon** on his recent appointment to the Board of Directors of the QUEENS COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SOCIETY.

MAZEL TOV

Ben Shapiro -- the son of member Caron Shapiro and the grandson of member and former FJC Sisterhood President and Bulletin Editor **Jean Shapiro** -- has been named the New York State Merit Winner of the fourteenth annual Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge.

Each year, thousands of middle school students enter the contest, and one student from each state and the District of Columbia is selected to receive a State Merit Winner prize. The nation's premier science competition for students in grades five through eight, the Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge rewards middle school students for their science acumen, demonstration of innovation and curiosity, and communication skills. Ben was selected for the prize based on his design of weight bars to help polio survivors adjust from outdated, metal braces to new plastic braces. Ben's idea was inspired by his grandmother Jean, who is herself a survivor of polio.

Mazel tov to Ben and the whole family, and may Ben continue to go from strength to strength!

Dr. & Mrs. Zachary Levine on the engagement of their grandson Avi to Bylee Flohr.

CONDOLENCES

To the family of **Richard Benson** who passed away this month.

Richard was a member of both the Queensboro Hills J.C and the Flushing-Fresh Meadows J.C. Until he recently became too ill to continue, he held the Office of Treasurer. He is survived by his children Barbara and Andrew who celebrated their Bat and Bar-Mitzvah at FFMJC.

To the family of **Bea Kauder** who passed away suddenly this month. She and her late husband Sam were members of FMJC since 1957.

To **Lawrence Fyman** on the passing of his beloved wife **Bess**.

To **Jerry Richman** on the passing of his beloved wife **Sylvia**.

WELCOME NEDW MEMBERS

- Jaime and Clara Erlach**
- Paul and Eleanor Frommer**
- Connie Hanan**
- Stan and Goldie Kerchman**
- Rita Kurz**
- Richard and Janet Pearlmutter**
- Lee Israel**
- Mordechay and Madlein Resisi**

WANTED

Now that some of our Friday night minyan regulars are going to Florida for the winter we need YOU to step up and help us continue to conduct Shabbat Evening Services. Look to The Bulletin for times.

SNOWBIRDS

If you are going to Florida for the winter, please notify the Office so that you continue to receive mail from us.

LOOK FOR US ON THE WEB
FFMJC@YAHOO.COM

RABBI'S MESSAGE

. Elie Wiesel once wrote: "Although we today are not responsible for the injustices of the past, we are responsible for the way we remember the past and what we do with that past. Only through the process of facing history and ourselves can we hope to stop the hatred and prevent further violence."

That said, I would like to touch upon the issue of Holocaust denial. In her brand new book, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism*, Phyllis Goldstein seeks to answer the question, "why would Nick Griffin of the British National Party and a number of other politicians and activists deny the most documented mass murder in history?" Walter Reich, former head of the United States Holocaust Museum offered one answer:

The primary motivation for most deniers is anti-Semitism and for them the Holocaust is an infuriatingly inconvenient fact of history. . . What better way to. . . make anti-Semitic arguments seem once again respectable in civilized discourse and even make it acceptable for governments to pursue anti-Semitic policies than by convincing the world that the great crime for which anti-Semitism was blamed simply never happened - indeed that it was nothing more than a frame-up invented by the Jews, and propagated by them through their control of the media? What better way, in short, to make the world safe again for anti-Semitism than by denying the Holocaust?

It is quite apparent that "the most prominent Holocaust denier has been Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who became president of Iran in 2005. What has motivated him and his followers to deny the Holocaust?" David Menashri of Tel Aviv University offers the following:

The immediate explanation may simply be a sincere belief in the need to eliminate Israel and a conviction that the Holocaust was a primary tool used to establish the Jewish state. . . It follows therefore that if the Holocaust never happened or at least if the world can be made to believe that it never happened, or if they get enough respectable people to deny it, or at least revise it out of existence, then Israel would have no claim at all to being the State of Israel. It would simply have no *raison de etre*. It would have no justification for being a Jewish state.

But this is only a small part of the problem of anti-Semitism in our day. Recent activities in the world have raised the red flag of anti-Semitism and waved it before our eyes. To give an encapsulated view, I refer to an essay by Jonathan Tobin, executive editor of *Commentary Magazine* entitled *The Rising Tide of Jew Hatred*. In it he recounts a number of countries and recent events which bear the smell, indeed the stigma of anti-Semitism. He refers us to the most recent U.S. State Department International Religious Freedom Report. "The results relating to Jews worldwide were appalling. Among those countries singled out were:

*Egypt, where anti-Semitic incitement in the media and popular culture played a major role even before the Muslim Brotherhood took over for the Mubarak regime;

*Iran, where official government anti-Semitism and support for Holocaust denial created a hostile environment for the Jewish community that remains in the country;

*the Palestinian Territories, where both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas publish and by Jonathan Tobin, executive editor of *Commentary Magazine* entitled *The Rising Tide of Jew Hatred*. In it he recounts a number of countries and recent events which bear the smell, indeed the stigma of anti-Semitism. He refers us to the most recent U.S. State Department International Religious Freedom Report. "The results relating to Jews worldwide were appalling. Among those countries singled out were:

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*Iran, where official government anti-Semitism and support for Holocaust denial created a hostile environment for the Jewish community that remains in the country;

*the Palestinian Territories, where both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas publish and broadcast anti-Semitic incitement and call for the death of Jews, and where Muslim riots have resulted in riots and violence against Jews;

*and Venezuela, where the Hugo Chavez regime has engaged in hatred against Jews and declared Zionism 'racist.'" Current events apparently related to anti-Semitism as per Tobin include this sampling:

1. The International Olympic Committee refused to allow even a minute to be devoted to the memory of the Israeli athletes murdered in Munich in 1972 because they saw it as somehow political. And yet nearly 6 minutes was devoted to commemorating the victims of the July 7, 2005 London Subway bombings. The IOC's unwillingness is very telling.

2.. The terrorist attacks on Israeli tourists in Bulgaria in July was more than an atrocity. The crime which took the lives of five Israelis and one Bulgarian was the work of Iran's terrorist ally, Hezbollah, reminding the world that Tehran remains a state sponsor of terrorism.. The Islamist regime has a long history of anti-Semitic violence aimed at children and teenagers.

3. The trial in a California discrimination case illustrates that anti-Semitism is still a much greater problem in this country. The Pakistani owner of a hotel is alleged to have demanded that her staff "get those (expletive deleted) Jews out of my pool. She expressed fears that her investors would cut her off if they knew a Jewish event was held there.

4. The decision of a German court to ban circumcision in June was not an isolated incident but an indication that the rules are changing when it comes to dealing with Jews even in so called penitent Germany. Despite Chancellor Angela Merkel's denunciation of the ruling and the parliament's adopting a resolution promising to pass legislation to protect circumcision, the echoes of the ruling are being heard throughout Europe. Two Swiss hospitals have now adopted the ban while other countries are debating the question. The movement to ban circumcision is calling into question the future of Jews on the European continent."

The Anti Defamation League presents statistics for their anti-Semitic findings: They write: "The resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe, both from traditional sources and virulent new strains, also remains a pressing concern for Jews. and revealed that anti-Semitism is rising in many countries on the continent, reminding us yet again of the need for government, religious and community leaders to speak out against all manifestations of anti-Jewish hate, and to redouble our efforts to educate against bigotry and prejudice."

Regarding the current state of affairs the ADL informs as follows: "Mass demonstrations and protests currently taking place in cities **across the Middle East and North Africa** have included fierce anti-Semitic and anti Jewish sentiment. Mostly occurring outside U.S. embassies these demonstrations are allegedly in response to a film known as Innocence of Muslims." (ATTACKS ON U.S. EMBASSIES WERE NOT ABOUT A MOVIE - *Caroline Glick*) - Information is presently available about anti-Semitic activity in the following countries regarding this: Egypt, Gaza, Algeria, Lebanon, Yemen and Kuwait.

The ADL has as current as possible information regarding anti-Semitic incidents in the following additional countries: Australia, Chile, Canada, France, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Russia, Spain, the U.K. and the U.S.

With regard to the U.S. the ADL reports in its annual 1,239 recorded anti-Semitic incidents across the United States in 2010, which represents a 2.3% increase over 2009. We can assume quite correctly that the number of incidents will not have gone down considerably, if at all in 2011 nor 2012.

The 2010 statistics included:

22 physical assault on Jewish Individuals

900 Cases of Anti-Semitic harassment, threats and events;

317 cases of anti-Semitic vandalism.

Of interest are the 4 states with the highest number of incidents. They are from low to high: Florida with 116 total incidents, New Jersey, with 130 incidents, New York, with 205 incidents and the state with the most incidents, 297 - California. There you have it - A taste of what is going on and where in the Jew Haters world. We are reminded on this holiest night that we are guaranteed of G-d's special love, and we are to return that love as well. We are to love each other and take care of each other and not depend on the nations of the world for love nor favors.

Dear Friends,

It is time to resolve to return to the Torah which G-d so generously gave to us - the source of our lives and the length of our days. We rely on its teachings to guide us in a cruel world and on G-d, the Torah's Benefactor to protect us from the evil designs of those who hate us.

Carrying out that resolution in the new year will please the Judge of all and virtually assure a good judgment for those who do. Forgiveness, pardon and atonement will be ours and Israel's security will be guaranteed as we read in Parashat B'chukotai: "If you walk in my statutes and keep my commandments and do them. . . And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down and none shall make you afraid. . . neither shall the sword go through your land."

As long as we follow the Torah in our lives, holding its banner up high we are guaranteed survival. It is the quality of Jewish living based on Torah teachings that has carried us, not our numerical strength or military prowess. In the words of the Talmud, "The People that is tired out by intensive Torah study will not be delivered into the hands of her oppressor." (Sanhedrin 94b)

It is our responsibility to ensure that G-d not be overlooked in this world, whether in periods of crisis, jubilation, or even our normative existence, that we merit the final victory, one in which His presence will reign openly, to be recognized by all, as we read: "And the L-rd shall be king over all the earth; on that day the L-rd shall be One and His name One." (Zechariah 14:9)

Rabbi G. M. Solomon

Kristallnacht: We Remember

On November 9 and 10, we mark the seventy-third anniversary of Kristallnacht, the "night of broken glass."

Rampaging mobs, spurred by the Nazi leadership, attacked Jewish targets throughout Germany and Austria.

The damage was immense. Hundreds of synagogues were burned to the ground. Thousands of Jewish-owned businesses were ransacked. Nearly 100 Jews were murdered. And tens of thousands of Jews were arrested and deported to Buchenwald, Dachau, and other concentration camps.

Their crime? They were Jews. It was as simple as that. Observant or atheist, Zionist or anti-Zionist, bourgeois or socialist, they were all subject to the same fate.

The war had not yet officially begun. That would start on September 1, 1939, not quite ten months after Kristallnacht. But the Nazi war against the Jews was already well under way.

The goal was to rid Germany, Austria, and, eventually, all of Nazi-occupied Europe of Jews.

The Nazis almost succeeded. By the war's end in 1945, six million Jews, or two-thirds of European Jewry, had been annihilated. And ancient centers of Jewish civilization, from Vilna to Salonika, from Amsterdam to Prague, had been all but wiped out.

On this tragic anniversary, and every day, remembrance is essential.

We remember the Jews of Germany and Austria, who had contributed so greatly to what they believed to be their homelands, and who became the targets of a genocidal policy.

We remember the new alphabet of annihilation created by the Third Reich, which began with "A" for Auschwitz and ended with "Z" for Zyklon-B, the killing agent used in the gas chambers.

We remember the vibrant lives of Jewish communities across Europe that were extinguished in the flames of the Holocaust.

We remember the 1.5 million Jewish children murdered in the relentless Nazi pursuit of the so-called Final Solution.

We remember how many borders were so callously closed to Europe's Jews when there was still a chance to escape.

We remember that our own country, the United States, yielding to domestic isolationism and anti-Semitism, did far less than it could have to shelter Europe's Jews.

We remember a world without the one country, Israel, which could have provided a haven to all Jews seeking sanctuary.

We remember that earlier in 1938, prior to Kristallnacht, Nazi Germany had moved with impunity into the Sudetenland, then part of Czechoslovakia, and Austria, with barely a peep from the international community.

We remember that just weeks before Kristallnacht, the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, traveled to Germany for the third time in two weeks and returned to London to assure the British public that there would be "peace for our time."

We remember the valiant forces of the Allied nations that ultimately destroyed the Nazi Reich and saved the world from Adolf Hitler's boast of a thousand-year reign.

We remember the military cemeteries across Europe, and beyond, filled with the graves of young soldiers who fought with such courage and bravery to defeat Nazi Germany and its allies.

And we remember the examples of those few who, at such risk, sought to shield Jews from harm.

Kristallnacht reminds us of the lurking capacity for inhumanity that resides in the human spirit.

Kristallnacht reminds us of nations that prided themselves on advanced levels of civilization, yet had a capacity for barbarism that exploded in ways never before witnessed.

Kristallnacht reminds us of the dire consequences when a targeted people is utterly without recourse to any means of self-defense.

Kristallnacht reminds us of the fertile soil of anti-Semitism, cultivated for centuries by religious, racial, and political ideologies obsessed with murdering, exiling, converting, segregating, or scapegoating the Jews.

Kristallnacht reminds us that there is a slippery slope from the demonization of a people, to the dehumanization of a people, to the destruction of a people.

And Kristallnacht reminds us that, in the face of evil against fellow human beings, never can silence be an option, indifference a strategy, or "never again" a mere slogan.

SISTERHOOD

Winter is approaching and even though some of us will be leaving for warmer climes the Sisterhood continues to have activities.

Please note all the following on your calendars and plan to participate.

The book discussion group meets monthly at 10:30 AM.

November 28th...Caleb's Crossing by Geraldine Brooks

December 27th...Kabul Beauty School by Deborah Rodriguez

The low impact exercise class meets every Tuesday morning at 11AM. Cost \$5.00 per session.

We are going to try to continue this class over the winter if we get a minimum of ten people each week. Please try it out! It's good for you and it is fun.

A wonderful afternoon is coming up to celebrate Chanukah on Wednesday, December 12th with a meal and entertainment. (Watch for flyer)

Purim is early this year (on Sunday, February 24th) and we have planned a celebration Seudah.

We wish the all the members of our Congregation a good and healthy winter. See you April 11th at our next Sisterhood meeting.

Marilyn and Joan
Co-Presidents

Sisterhood

"The Simcha Cake Project"

Sisterhood has created a way of announcing special Simchas and other events in order to support the Torah Fund of the Jewish Theological Seminary. At each meeting we will be able to announce our Simcha and have it published in the Bulletin with a minimum donation of \$1.00. This is in lieu of putting Tzedakah boxes on the tables. Torah Fund contributions ensure our legacy to future generations of Conservative Jews by training Rabbis, Cantors, Educators, Scholars and Lay Leaders.

The following Simchas were announced at the September 6, 2012 meeting

Joyce Warshowsky	Good health to all, especially departing Snowbirds
Rosalie Weiner	Mazel Tov to Anita Bernstein on her granddaughter's marriage in Israel
Joan Corn	Congratulations to Joan Levine on engagement of grandson Avi
Sandra Schwadron	Happy New Year to all
Joan Kase-Riger	Good Health to all
Marilyn Brown	Good Health to all
Betty Feit	A good winter to all
Susan Gastman	A happy, healthy New Year to all
Sylvia Udasin	Best wishes to the Snowbirds
Anita Bernstein	Good health to everyone
Florence Cvern	Good health and joy to all
Rochelle Mendelow	I thank and salute all our veterans
Joan Levine	In honor of grandson Avi's engagement
Ray Mishler	Wishing Amanda luck in her attempted run for the Marathon
Lynn Kirby	In honor of my grandchildren
Helen Daniels	Happy, healthy New Year
Elaine Rubin	In honor of grandson Matthew's Bar Mitzvah
Ruth Lasky	Happy New Year to all
Edith Dressler	Happy New Year to all
Florence Gross	Happy New Year to all
Miriam Rossetti	Good luck to everyone
Leona Goodman	Good health to all
Ida Golden	Good health for the holidays
Maxine Marcus	A good year to all
Sarah Sokol	Granddaughter started and loves College

CHANUKAH: A BRIEF HISTORY

Chanukah, the Jewish festival of rededication, also known as the festival of lights, is an eight day festival beginning on the 25th day of the month of Kislev. In the Western world, Chanukah is probably one of the best known Jewish holidays. Chanukah is actually a simple historical commemoration, celebrating the victory of a small band of Jewish rebels fighting against the imposing might of the Hellenistic Assyrian army. Commemorating this fight against oppression and assimilation, we kindle lights to remember the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, and to rededicate ourselves to strengthening our own Jewish identities today.

Talmudic Beginnings

The rabbis of the Talmud ask a strange question: Mai Chanukah? (Shabbat 21b). Loosely translated, this means, "What is Hanukkah?" At this point you may be asking: "you mean the ancient sages of our tradition didn't know the story about the wicked king and the flask of oil that lasted eight days and about latkes and dreidels and little chocolate coins?"

Well, except for the little chocolate coins part, the ancient sages did know that story. In fact, they gave it to us. What they were not sure about was how to properly celebrate the holiday, or how all the different traditions that had developed fit together.

To explain how the ancient rabbis saw Chanukah, first let's take a step back and look at the historical record, as best we understand it. In 167 B.C.E., a king named Antiochus Epiphanes ruled over a chunk of the Middle East that included the land of Israel. He wanted to unify all the peoples under his rule with one culture, the Greek-Roman culture called Hellenism, which had been handed down from the time of Alexander the Great (ca 323 B.C.E.). So Antiochus outlawed the study of Torah and the practice of Judaism, and put Greek gods in Jewish holy places.

Some Jews went along with Antiochus's edicts and assimilated into Hellenism, but other Jews rebelled against these oppressive laws. The most successful rebel was a Hasmonean priest named Mattathias. He and his five sons, including the legendary Judah the Maccabee (Judah the "Hammer") led a successful rebellion to retake Jerusalem and reestablish Jewish sovereignty. When they took over the Temple and cleaned out all the remnants of the idolatrous Greek worship, they rededicated the Temple and then immediately, according to one historical account, held a late observance of the eight day festival of Sukkot, the most important festival of Temple times, and the most recent one to have gone unobserved. The next year, to commemorate their victory and the rededication of the Temple, a "late Sukkot" was held again, thereby giving birth to our eight-day celebration of Chanukah - which means "dedication".

The deeds of the Maccabees were recorded and reported to other Jewish communities throughout the Land of Israel and to those communities outside the land that developed during the first exile and who never returned. The oldest sources we have for the story of the Maccabees is the . The First Book of Maccabees is a simple history, telling the story of the revolt and continuing the story of resistance that continued after the revolt when the Hasmoneans took over the monarchy. The Second Book of Maccabees was composed as a letter, written to the Jewish community of Alexandria, explaining the events that took place and encouraging them to commemorate the Hasmonean victory by observing the new holiday of Chanukah.

So what happened to the story of the oil and the miracle of the lights? Well, that's where the rabbis come in. In the rabbinic sources, we find virtual silence on the topic of Chanukah in the Mishnah. It is only in the Gemara (the later rabbinic material which, along with the Mishnah makes up the Talmud) that we find the new story about the oil and the miracle of the lights. By the time of the development of the Talmud, the Jews were living under Roman rule in Israel and under Persian rule in Babylon. In these circumstances, celebrating stories about military rebellion might not be viewed in too positive a light by the authorities, and the sages also feared that some Jewish hotheads might stir up trouble and cause all kinds of problems for the Jewish community. So the Talmudic sages chose to emphasize the oil/miracle aspect of the established holiday. G-d wrought a great miracle for the people, enabling the few to triumph over the many, and G-d showed the people another miracle in the oil, when a flask of ritually pure oil sufficient for one day lasted for all eight days (of the late observed Sukkot Festival.)

But there is more. The battle fought by the Maccabees was not only a revolt against religious oppression and colonial domination, but it was a civil war as well, fought between pietistic adherents to a strict traditional observance of Judaism (as practised in those days) and those who were attracted to the might and worldliness of Hellenism and sought to acculturate. Ironically though, after their victory, the Hasmoneans assumed the Monarchy of Israel - which, in of it-

self was prohibited for a priestly family, and eventually, after some generations, became advocates of Hellenization and invited the Roman Empire to become protectors of Israel, setting the stage for the eventual Roman conquest. As a priestly family, the Hasmoneans sided with the Sadducees, the priestly advocates of the authority of Temple Sacrifice, against the Pharisees, the forerunners of the rabbis and the form of rabbinic Judaism we continue to practice today.

With the destruction of the Second Temple, the fall of the Sadducees, and the ultimate conquest of the Land of Israel by the Romans, the new rabbinic authorities assume the mantle of religious authority. Unhappy with the Hasmoneans and critical of the eventual outcome of the Maccabean revolt, the Rabbis set out to relegate Chanukah and the Maccabees to a mere footnote in Jewish history. Hence the exclusion of Maccabees from Hebrew Scriptures and the shift in the emphasis of Chanukah from the victory of the Maccabees to G-d's miracle of light. Effectively, the Rabbis sought to write the Maccabees out of Jewish history. Like the exclusion of Moses from the Passover Haggada, the Maccabees were removed from Chanukah, and the spotlight was put on G-d.

So back to our Talmudic question: Mai Chanukah? "What is Chanukah?" Well, the answer depends on your perspective. It could be a holiday of religious freedom, inspired by the people's desire to shake off oppressive laws. It could be commemoration of the human capacity for courage and hopefulness, as we remember the Maccabees' brave revolution. It could be an opportunity to reflect on Jewish distinctiveness and the miracle of Jewish survival in societies that offer so many opportunities to just chuck it all and assimilate. It could be a spur to many Jews to reach out to each other across denominational and ideological boundaries, inasmuch as the Maccabean revolt was also a civil war between Hellenized and non-assimilated Jews. It could be, as the Talmud suggests, a time to thank G-d for the miracles in our lives; a time to think about what is in G-d's hands and not in human hands. It could be a chance to ask ourselves: what seemingly ordinary things can I experience as miracles today?

LIGHTING THE CHANUKAH CANDLES

On the first night of Chanukah, put one candle on the right side of your Chanukiah, and say these blessings before lighting it. Light the Chanukiah **BEFORE** lighting Shabbat candles on erev Shabbat.

Barukh atah adonai, elohenu melekh ha'olam, asher kidshanu bemitsvotav, vetsivanu lehadlik ner shel chanukah.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us through His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.

Barukh atah adonai, elohenu melekh ha'olam, she'asah nisim la'avotenu bayamim hahem bazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who made miracles for our ancestors, in those days, at this season.

On the first night only, we add:

Barukh atah adonai, elohenu melekh ha'olam, shehekheyanu vekiyemanu, vehigi'anu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has given us life, and sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.

On the second night, put two candles in, and light starting from the "new" candle on the left, reciting only the first two blessings. Keep on increasing each night, until you've got all eight candles lit.

The lighting of the Chanukiah is done at home, after nightfall, (50 minutes after sunset) or when the family has gathered. Some people put the Chanukiah in the window for the purpose of "publicizing the miracle." In many synagogues, special prayers of thanksgiving are added to the services, and a special Chanukah paragraph, "Al Ha-nisim," is added to the Amidah and Birkat HaMazon - the blessings after the meal.

