

Weekly Teaching

December 8, 2017

Next Tuesday evening, throughout the world, the Jewish People will celebrate Chanukah.

When we kindle our Chanukah lights we will recall the victory of the ancient Maccabees over their Greek-Syrian oppressors: those who had fervently persecuted us, and attempted to prevent the practicing of our Jewish faith according to our own traditional ways.

The Maccabees were first led by Mattathias, and then later by his son Judah.

They overcame staggering odds and managed to conquer and then rededicate the Beit HaMikdash, our holy Jerusalem Temple.

The Maccabees rebellion began in Modiin, but victory wasn't possible until Jewish sovereignty was firmly reestablished over Jerusalem.

For over 3000 years, since King David, the historical and spiritual center of the Jewish People has been Jerusalem.

Yet, for the past 70 years the world has refused to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

But, this has finally changed.

This week, for the first time, the United States formally recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital city.

Additionally, the State Department has been instructed to begin the process of moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem.

This decision to officially recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital doesn't preclude future negotiations over the holy city's final status, borders or the goal of two states for two peoples.

But, it does say to the world that Israel is here to stay, and an Israeli flag will be flying over parts of Jerusalem no matter the final determination of a Two-State solution.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu noted that this recent decision "is an important step towards peace, for there is no peace that doesn't include Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel."

Netanyahu's opposition leader in the Knesset, Isaac Herzog, noted that this "has made an act of historic justice, due for 70 years, by recognizing what every Israeli knows: that Jerusalem is Israel's capital."

Herzog went on to note that this move should prompt both sides "to realize the vision of two states, addressing all the core issues, for the sake of the security and peace of both peoples."

When we sing "Chanukah, O' Chanukah" there is a stanza:

*The Maccabean victory we will tell, we will sing /
Over the Greeks then did their hands overpower /
Jerusalem returned to life /
The nation of Israel made its salvation.*

Chanukah is a reminder that throughout our centuries of exile we annually lit our Chanukah candles and experienced the hope of freedom from persecution.

Today, on Chanukah, we should recall the miracle that is the modern State of Israel.

We can be grateful that the United States has formally accepted not only the current reality, but the historic truth that Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish people.

Hopefully, this reality can serve as a helpful catalyst to effective negotiations resulting in a Jewish state living side-by-side in peace with a Palestinian state.

The best and most permanent solution to continued violence is to seek a just peace.

Recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital is merely an affirmation of the reality that all need to address.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Chanukah,

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