

Chanukah in Modi'in is always a time of enormous excitement. As we spin the *sivivon* (dreidel) – the four letters that grace the top are not the same letters that our friends abroad have on their dreidel. Here in Israel the letters are: *Nun, Gimmel, Hey, Pey*. They stand for the words: *Nes Gadol Haya **Po*** – A great miracle happened **HERE**. In all countries outside of Israel, the Jewish community spins tops with the letters: *Nun, Gimmel, Hey, Shin* : *Nes Gadol Haya **Sham*** – A great miracle happened **THERE**.

And indeed the miracle of the Hasmonean revolt which took place to guarantee the freedom of religious expression happened right **here** on the very same ground of the ancient city of Modi'in!

In celebration of this miracle, *Kehillat YOZMA* becomes a landscape of light, hope and joy for the eight days of Chanukah. Our festivities include a community-wide bike ride from the historic grave site of the Maccabees to the new site of our historical pre-fab synagogue building – the first non-Orthodox synagogue to be built by the State of Israel. It is an especially dramatic ride as all the participants carry torches that symbolically show that the flame of religious freedom lit by the Maccabees still shines brightly in the hands of the Reform Jewish community in Modi'in. At the end of this exciting ride, our youth will raise their torches to ignite ropes twisted into signs and symbols celebrating YOZMA's new home and growing presence in the Modi'in community.

The light continues to shine upon us as we light the sixth candle of Chanukah together as a community prior to the entrance of Shabbat. Families from all circles of the YOZMA community join together at the synagogue for this joyous event. We will fill the hall with hundreds of bright candles as we welcome Shabbat Chanukah with song and prayer.

May the Chanukah lights burn brightly upon all of us while we face the dark storm clouds of economic insecurity – may they bring us all a sense of hope and faith that we will weather the storm and continue to spread the light of Progressive Jewish values across the globe.

Rabbi Kinneret Shiryon and Rabbi Nir Barkin