

I love that we are celebrating Hadassah Installation during Hanukkah. The story is, that in the year 168 B.C.E., the Greek tyrant Antiochus sent his soldiers to Jerusalem. Antiochus tried to abolish Judaism, outlawing the observance of Shabbat and the festivals. His soldiers desecrated the Temple and set up altars and idols for the worship of Greek gods. Antiochus offered the Jews two options: convert or die.

We are inspired by the legend of the Maccabees who revolted against the Hellenization of Antiochus and fought to preserve their culture. Though outnumbered, Judah Maccabee and his followers miraculously defeated the Greek armies sent to crush them.

Hanukkah evokes stirring images of Jewish valor in the face of overwhelming odds. The holiday also reminds us of our people's long history of refusing to submit to the religious demands of the ruling empire, our ongoing struggle against total assimilation into the dominant culture and loss of Jewish identity, and our long-enduring fight for Jewish political autonomy and self-determination.

What I find incredible is that nearly 2,200 years after this revolt and victory, we are still fighting many of these same battles.

Today, we still seek balance between being part of the Jewish community and being part of the American community. Our community still struggles against assimilation, and our institutions still fight to preserve Jewish identity. And so too, do we continue to fight for our people's right to political autonomy and freedom in our homeland, the land of Israel.

I am proud that during my time as president of Hadassah Boston we have continued in the tradition of the Maccabees and helped our members strengthen their Jewish identity and connection with Israel.

Together, we've added new members and kept seasoned members engaged with programs and events that strengthen their connection to one another, to the community, and to our important work in Israel.

We strengthened our hearts as part of Every Step Counts initiative.

We strengthened our buying power to do good works at Keepers and Chai donor events and a no-show pool party fundraiser.

We strengthened our collective voices and power at advocacy visits to the Statehouse, at our recent Breast Cancer Awareness Program and at the Advocacy Conference "Discover The Power of Your Voice". We strengthened our connections to Israel through cultural programs, Yom Ha'Atzmaut celebration, author talks and

guest speakers. And we strengthened our community and friendships at theatre parties and summer gatherings on Cape Cod.

Together, we have also made improvements to our own organization so that Hadassah Boston can continue to serve our community's values with the same robust impact we always have. Although it hasn't always been easy, we are learning new technologies. We now send members online newsletters and keep friends up to date on our Hadassah Boston Website and FB page. Check us out and connect to us online!

With grateful appreciation, I thank the partners and team members who have helped bring these wonderful programs to life. Thank you, Temple Emanuel Sisterhood, for your partnership in raising awareness and funds for breast cancer research. Thank you, Ann Levensohn, Administrative Assistant, for your support, assistance and ever-present smile. Thank you, Julie Newburg, Managing Director for your guidance and organization. Thank you to Resource Chair, Carole Greenfield, for leading HNE presidents toward greater cooperation and collaboration. And thank you to each of my colleagues and friends on the Board for giving of your time, talent and treasure to

engage our members and support the important work we do here and in Israel.

I have been truly honored to serve and represent Hadassah Boston these past three years. National President Ellen Hershkin recently said to me “Varda, you have Zionism in your DNA”. And she is correct. Hadassah has given me a meaningful way to express my Zionism and continue my parents’ proud legacy of building and supporting Israel—a core piece of my identity.

I have enjoyed sharing with Hadassah women news about our projects in Israel. I have been motivated by visiting Hadassah hospital and meeting grateful patients whose lives were saved by extraordinary medical care and touched by the exceptional care of Hadassah’s dedicated nurses and brilliant physicians.

And I was privileged to join Hadassah’s leadership for the joyous and emotional ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem and of our two hospital campuses.

I’ve also especially enjoyed meeting the inspiring and likeminded women doing this work throughout the country.

On January 1st Debbie Knight will take over the reins as Hadassah Boston Regional President. I have known Debbie a long time and know she will take this mission and run with it to new places and

new heights. I will be here to render guidance, support and help if asked, and offer Debbie and the newly installed board my blessing that they take the Boston Region from Strength to Strength,
“Yashier kochechem”

After stepping down as Chief Rabbi of the UK, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote, “My life is a chapter in a book begun by my ancestors long ago, but to which I will add my contribution before handing it over to my children, life has meaning when it is part of a story....”

I am honored that my story is now part of Hadassah’s story just as Hadassah’s story is part of Israel’s story.

The Maccabees didn’t have much, but they fought with what they had—passion and belief. We have so much—the richness of this robust organization, the legacy of the women who came before us, and the support of an organized community.

Hanukkah reminds us to rededicate ourselves as Jews. To stand for our values and beliefs and to keep alive the flames of Jewish religion, culture, and peoplehood. Hadassah does that work every day, and I am proud to be part of it.

It’s been an exciting and purposeful time for me as your President. Thank you for enriching my life these past three years!