

Invocation for Greensboro Jewish Federation Campaign Kick Off
December 2, 2007
Jews and Ice Cream!

It's fitting that we celebrate the Federation Campaign kickoff with ice cream this year, particularly at this time just before Chanukah. Jews probably first came to love ice cream from their contact with the Greeks, who are recorded as early ice cream lovers, mixing snow from the mountains with honey and nuts, and selling it in the market places of Athens. From there, it's a short hop to imagine the Greeks, who ruled *Eretz Yisrael* in the time of the Maccabees, introducing ice cream to the Jews, who probably took the snows from Mt Hermon in the Golan Heights, and mixed it with local date syrup, and perhaps cream from their goats who pastured on Mt. Gilead, near the Kinneret.

However, as you might guess, our frozen lactose-laden treat isn't mentioned in the Torah. It wasn't until nineteen hundred years after the Maccabees that there was a Hebrew word for ice cream. It took the creativity of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the reviver of the ancient Hebrew language, to come up with the word *G'lidah*, from the ancient biblical root *gimel-lamed-dalet*, meaning "congealed."

What Eliezer Ben Yehuda did was critical not just to Hebrew, but to our Jewish People and our people's history. He saw the challenges of the time-- the need for a living Jewish national language. While holding fast to heritage and tradition, Ben Yehuda innovated and invented and preserved and made new, so that today, Jews in Tel Aviv and in Greensboro, can enjoy *G'lida shel Ben and Jerry's*.

This evening, we celebrate the ongoing creative growth our own Jewish Community of Greensboro, NC, and of *Am Yisrael*--the Jewish People worldwide. Through Federation, and Synagogue, and School, we preserve the past while innovating for the present and the future. We help build, and rebuild, Jewish communities around the world. We support our aged, and bring our poor out of the depths, to become productive. We teach our children, and ourselves, the beauty and mission of our heritage, so that Judaism remains a moral and ritual guide to make us more human, and to repair our world where it is broken.

This coming Tuesday night, we begin the festival of Chanukah. We celebrate the heroism of the Maccabees, and the rededication of the Temple that kept Judaism alive. Today, our people is still alive; alive, and thriving, and growing and creative and relevant and healing the world. We are so amazingly fortunate and proud to be children of the Maccabees, part of the Jewish People. Tonight, and Tuesday night, and for eight nights after, we celebrate the joy of our heritage. That little cruse of oil, kindled in the Temple long ago, lasted not just for eight days, but for two millennia, and is still burning bright.

Rabbi Eliezer Havivi