

## **Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem**

### *Thought for the Day*

*Ephraim Borowski (Director, Scottish Council of Jewish Communities)*

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Unless you've been in hibernation, you must have noticed that Jerusalem has been in the news again – although that itself isn't news!

But I don't want to talk about politics – or rather not current politics. I want to take you back more than 2000 years to the time of Alexander the Great. Alexander grew up with a few advantages – his father was king of Macedonia, and he was tutored by Aristotle, one of the greatest philosophers ever – and the empire he created stretched from south-east Europe and Egypt, across the Middle East, to the Punjab. Alexander turned this into a kind of Greater Greece, united by Greek language and culture, but he also allowed local traditions to continue, and even joined in, so he won the loyalty and even affection of his very diverse subjects. So he was in many ways a hero for our time too.

So it is very fitting that today many political leaders and public figures will join the Jewish Community in publicly celebrating the festival of Chanukah. Last night the First Minister lit a menorah in St Andrews Square in Edinburgh; tonight the Scottish Parliament will welcome the Chief Rabbi; St Bride's Church in Dumfries are hosting a local celebration in their hall; and on Sunday there will be a procession to the new Jewish school in East Renfrewshire.

That's precisely the spirit of the festival, which is to publicise the miracle – not just the story children learn about the oil lamp that miraculously burned for eight days, but a story of survival against the odds, when the rulers who followed Alexander set up idols in the temple in Jerusalem and made practising Judaism a capital offence.

It's a curious fact that the story of Chanukah doesn't appear in the Jewish Bible, though it's in some Christian scriptures, so in that way too it reminds us of the importance of Jerusalem to both faiths. So whatever our political opinions, let's hope we can come together in these uncertain times to pray for peace of Jerusalem.