

SPEAKING UP

The lights of Chanukah burn for him

BY MARK WILF
AND CHARLES "SHAI" GOLDSTEIN

Esh Kodesh Gilmore will not be celebrating Chanukah in Elizabeth or in Modi'in, Israel. He was shot in the head at point-blank range by Palestinian terrorists on Oct. 30.

The lights of Chanukah burn in remembrance of the first victory for religious freedom in the history of the world. They will also burn in memory of Esh, whose roots were in New Jersey and in Modi'in, Israel. Esh's grandparents, Ian and Edna Alexander, and Esh's mother, Zahava, are from Elizabeth. Zahava moved to Israel in the 1970s and settled on a moshav (a semi-collective community) near Modi'in, where Esh grew up.

Chanukah, also known as the "Festival of Lights," touched Esh Kodesh's reason for living in many ways. His name, Esh Kodesh, means "holy fire." The town where he grew up, Me'or Modi'in, means "the light" of Modi'in. And Modi'in is the town

from which the Maccabees (the Jewish warriors who drove the Hellenized Syrians out of Israel) originated. The Chanukah lights commemorate the desecration and rededication of the second Temple in Jerusalem. After the temple was rededicated, enough oil was found to provide light for only one night. However, the oil lasted for eight nights.

These months have marked the use of children as human shields by the Palestinians, seen the desecration and destruction of Joseph's Tomb and an attack on Rachel's Tomb.

Esh Kodesh was murdered while working as a security guard in the National Insurance Institute in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Elazar Teltz of Elizabeth said, "Esh's loss is personal. It's not just something that's theoretical situation. It brings it home. It's ours. It's family. We are a close-knit community. We feel the pain and we feel that we have been attacked."

His uncle, Sam Alexander, who lives in

Springfield, recalls when Esh flew with his grandfather, Ian Alexander. "Ian was an American bomber pilot during World War II. They flew over New Jersey in a Cessna 152, when Esh was a boy and observed the richness and lushness of the fields and forests — noting God's beauty is everywhere from the Galilee to Gloucester County."

Esh had the makeup of a true Maccabee. He lived in Modi'in, showed gentle and kind leadership, was an athlete and cut a handsome, muscular figure. He served in the army and guarded the poor in a welfare office. Like his grandfather, who served America in World War II, he defended not only his country but democracy and justice.

Esh Kodesh Gilmore was born on Dec. 21, 1974. The first night of Chanukah this year is tonight. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Mark Wilf is chairman of the New Jersey Anti-Defamation League. Charles "Shai" Goldstein is the league's regional director.