

In My Opinion...

By Amy Krakovitz Montoni

I recently read somewhere that of all five senses, the one that is most connected to our memory center is the sense of smell. Just lately I truly believe this.

While I was putting together the Chanukah section found on pages 15 through 21, I noticed my memory and my sense of smell interacting. This was while looking through and entering in the page of recipes for latkes. Just the thought of potato latkes and Chanukah brought back memories. There were snippets of visual memories: the Happy Chanukah sign hanging in the living room and the old silver Menorah on the dining room table. There were brief auditory memories as well: singing the *brachot* and *Ma'oz Tsur*, as well as happy laughter during a game of dreidel. I even

felt a brief sense of warmth, with the stove going in the kitchen, keeping out the cold December night.

But the strongest memory really was the aroma: of melting wax from the candles; of milk chocolate *gelt*; and of course the heavy, greasy odor of frying potatoes. Oh, I can almost taste them! They were best with sour cream, but sometimes we had to have only applesauce.

And the taste!!! We often made them with *schmaltz* back then for a flavor no other cooking medium can compare to. We also all ended up with cholesterol levels no other



cooking medium could produce.

Nowadays our latkes are mostly convenience products. I've used the mixes that come in the box and they're pretty good. Last year I tried a frozen brand and they were less greasy, but more like French fries than latkes.

So, this year try an scratch recipe and make an olfactory memory for your family. There's a traditional potato latke recipe on page 20, as well as some more eclectic versions.

And if you're going to take some latkes to your children's school, try this tip from Ellen Martin to keep them from getting too cold and therefore too greasy: as soon as you drain them on paper towels and while they're still hot, put them in a pan and cover it well with tin foil. Then wrap the pan with two large towels. No kidding. It works.

Happy Chanukah!! *



Point of View

Each issue of the CJN features an article written by one of three rabbis active in the Charlotte Community.

This Month:

Rabbi Yossi Groner of Lubavitch of North Carolina

Why an Outdoor Chanukah?

Why is the night of Chanukah different from all other holiday nights of the year? On all other holiday nights we celebrate indoors with curtains drawn, on the night of Chanukah we light the Menorah near a window or a door.

When the Maccabees established the festival of Chanukah, some twenty-three centuries ago, as a commemoration to the great miracle that happened in Jerusalem, they stipulated that the miracle must be publicized. Thus came the tradition to light the Menorah towards the street, so people passing recognize the jubilant celebrations and the joyous thanksgiving of the Jews.

There is a mystical explanation to the outdoor lighting as well.

The ultimate goal of the Syrian Greeks in their battle against the Jews was to weaken the commitment of the Jews to God by contaminating the purity of the Torah, diluting it with Greek culture and immodest behavior. Jews were forced to worship idols and engage in activity that was forbidden by God.

Symbolically the oils in the Temple were contaminated by the Greeks and unworthy of use in the service of the Menorah. It was the intent of the Greeks to have the Jews use the impure oil in the Menorah, thus removing the divine holiness from the Temple.

Only one protected flask of oil hidden beneath the floor of the Temple, bearing the seal of the High Priest was found and used after the miraculous victory.

The pure flask of oil represented the pure uncontaminated light of the Torah. When lit, the candles shone brightly and miraculously for eight nights. The miracle of the lights captured the essence of the Chanukah holiday. That holiness will prevail over the profane, quality reigns over quantity, righteousness over evil, spirit over matter and light over darkness.

The purpose of the battle of the Maccabees, which led to the eventual miracle of Chanukah, was to reclaim the spirit of Judaism and bring it back to people who had assimilated under Greek influence. It would be of little value if the celebrations were held privately in the comfort of one's home. By going public and announcing the miracle to everyone the celebrants shared the message of God and spirituality with all Jews even with those who had abandoned Judaism or simply ignored it.

It is a misconception to say that Chanukah has become more significant recently because of the other holiday that falls about the same time of year. The truth is that Chanukah has always been significant and important. However, in the old era, when Jews lived in an oppressed society it was difficult to share the warmth of Chanukah with their tormentors. Today when we live in an open and friendly society it is imperative to publicize the Chanukah miracle to all and illuminate the darkness of the night with the lights of the Menorah.

Some of us even go to the extent of lighting the Menorah in public places like shopping centers, malls or City-Centers where Chanukah receives increased attention and publicity. The events attract large crowds and give us the opportunity to explain Chanukah and its observance in a meaningful and exciting way.

In recent years Chabad-Lubavitch hosted the program *Chanukah Live!* on PBS Television, where through satellite transmission thousands of Jews were connected in various capitals of the world with their Chanukah celebrations. Huge Menorahs were kindled in front of an audience of millions.

Most touching was the Menorah ceremony at Red Square in Moscow where members of the Red Army military band played Jewish music with the large Menorah in the background. Thousand of Russian Jews were seen dancing to the lively music in the bitter cold Russian winter.

To think that just a few years earlier this sort of activity would bring arrest and exile to those participants in Moscow underscores the victory of Chanukah in our day and age.

The dramatic change of freedom and the outpouring of pure Jewish spirituality are the real message of Chanukah. The Maccabees stood proud with God and his Torah and fought the enemy to the bitter end. Eventually their struggle for freedom paved the way for their descendants in generations to come to hold the torch of Judaism with pride under other difficult circumstances.

Today when we light the Menorah each night of Chanukah, we remember the martyrs of Judaism in all generations. If not

(Continued on page 10)

Volunteer Opportunities at Crisis

'Tis the Season to be Busy!

Crisis Assistance Ministry needs volunteers to work regular daytime shifts (9:00 AM - 12:30 PM and 2:30 PM - 4:00 PM) in the front office. Tasks include answering the appointment phone, retrieving files for interviews, making new files, logging clients in on a daily register, refiling, making copies, serving as a courier to staff members. Orientation is Tuesday, December 1 at 9:30 AM. To register or for more informa-

tion, contact Anne Davant at 371-3001, ext. 114.

Come Help Crisis Assistance Ministry Sort through its Holiday Madness!

November and December are hectic months for donations of clothing and household items at Crisis Assistance. Many hands are needed from November 15 to January 15 to get these donations into the hands of the needy.

Individuals, couples, families,

and "best buddies" are invited to participate in this great opportunity to give time in the season of giving. Flexible schedules are available. Volunteers receive:

- gratification
- healthy benefits of physical activity
- fellowship to the tune of upbeat music
- a wealth of appreciation

For details, call Larry Long at 371-3001, ext. 139. *

HIAS Offers Effective Low Cost Employment Strategies Seminar for Professionals in Refugee Settlement

HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, will offer a one day seminar on effective low cost employment strategies for professionals in refugee resettlement in mid-December in Charlotte, North Carolina. The program, to be held for the south and southeast region, will focus on how to develop, implement and run specialized employment programs for newly-arrived and hard-to-place refugees (e.g., older workers or those with poor English skills). It was made

possible by a grant from the Baron de Hirsch Fund.

"We're delighted to be offering this program in Charlotte, the home of one of our successful free case placement projects," said Leonard Glickman, HIAS's Executive Vice President.

He continued, "Achieving self-sufficiency, building job skills and finding employment opportunities for our clients continues to be a priority for our post-migration effort. We can better help

refugees, especially those not easily placed, get the training and job prospects to help build a better life through sharing best practices."

Sessions will include a look at assisted employment and developing low cost employment training programs. For more information on the date, location and program registration, please contact Norman Levine, HIAS's Director of Community Services at 212/967-4100. *

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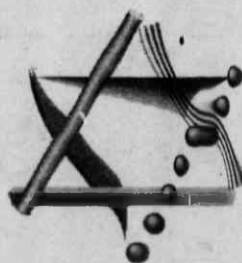
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