

In My Opinion...

By Amy Krakovitz Montoni

"Private garden," the sign said, "please enjoy from the street."

And I did enjoy it, peering in from the sidewalk through the double wooden gate that had been left open at the end of the driveway.

Mr. M. and I had gone to Charleston for a few days and in our walking around the historic district, taking pleasure in the incredible architecture still standing for over 200 years, we found ourselves at yet another beautiful home with an unbelievably opulent garden below its three-tiered side veranda.

When we passed the front door on the street side, I noticed a mezuzah in the doorway. The historical plaque by the door told the story of the house, the Poyas-Mordecai Home. It had been built in the 1700's by a Mr. Poyas, but was purchased in the 1800's by Moses Cohen Mordecai. Mr. Mordecai was a successful merchant who was against secession at the time of the Civil War. He eventually altered his loyalties to the Confederacy, but his business was ruined. He left the south for Baltimore, but his final legacy was ensuring that the bodies of the South Carolina boys who had fallen at Gettysburg were returned to their homes.

Pointing at the mezuzah, I remarked that I was happy to see that the house was still obviously in the family.

Mr. M. expressed doubt, though. There are lots of regulations on historical homes, he



The garden at the Poyas-Mordecai Home.

explained. The new owners may not even have been allowed to remove the mezuzah. That could be Mr. Mordecai's original mezuzah.

I accepted this as a possibility and we walked on to a park right next to the house. From the small park, we could see the windows on one side on the Mordecai Home. And there, in the middle of the second floor, on display for all to see, were half a dozen or more Chanukah menorahs. I pointed them out to Mr. M. At least we know the mezuzah belongs to the current family, I said.

Indeed it must, as Charleston's history is rich with Jewish culture. More information on Charleston's Jewish history can be found on page 24, as Maxine Silverstein also visited Charleston this summer. I visited some of the same places she did: Kahal Kodesh Beth Elohim (where the docent

expressed such joy that Rabbi Robert Siegel was coming back to Charleston); the Francis Salvador memorial plaque in City Hall Park; the Hebrew Orphan Society, which was right around the corner from my hotel.

Mr. M. and I also walked all the way past the Medical University of South Carolina to the Orthodox synagogue, whose inscription above the front door reads: "Ma Tovv Ohalecha Yaakov, Mishkenotecha Yisrael."

We ate lunch at Aaron's Deli, a part of Hyman's Seafood that has been in Hyman family since 1890. The menu calls their chopped liver sandwich "Jewish soul

food" and their omelets come in two varieties: so-called "kosher" (mushroom and swiss) or "treif" (ham and swiss).

Even without the Jewish aspect of our trip, Charleston was such a wonderful place to be. We stayed in the historic district and were able to walk everywhere. We strolled along the water and the Battery in the evening while the cool breezes blew in from offshore. We visited the Old Exchange Building and learned the history of Charleston through a program in its ancient dungeon. We toured the Heyward-Washington Home (built in the 1790's) and the Joseph Manigault Home (built in 1805). We admired the Calhoun home from outside but left the tour for our next trip, and believe me, there will be a next trip. Charleston is too wonderful and too close by to ignore. ☆

Point of View

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

This Month:

Rabbi Yossi Groner of Lubavitch of North Carolina

FOR THE LOVE OF THE LAND

The month of August this year comes right about the time that we prepare for the 9th of Av (August 10), a day that has been marked as a day of mourning and fasting as we lament the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temples that stood in its midst. It was on this day that the Babylonians destroyed the first Holy Temple built by King Solomon, and the Romans destroyed the second Holy Temple built by King Herod.

It is amazing that after thousands of years, Jews still lament the destruction of the Temple and yearn for it to be rebuilt. Each day we ask God in prayer to rebuild the Temple and city of Jerusalem and to return His glory to Zion. This strong desire for return to our land has been the driving force behind the resettlement of the Land of Israel in the past few hundred years.

The innate love that the Jew has for the Land of Israel is rooted deep in our souls. It is in Israel that we feel completely at home. How else can you explain the extraordinary dedication of Israel's early pioneers when revitalizing the land? Although they faced seemingly insurmountable challenges in which they had to take a barren land filled with obstacles, rocky terrain, diseased water sources, etc., yet with undeterred determination and with God's help they successfully transformed it into a green and fruitful oasis.

Wherever Jews were dispersed in the Diaspora and under all circumstances, the Land of Israel lived in their hearts. We always prayed in the direction of Jerusalem and clung to the immortal words of the psalmist, "If I forget thee, Jerusalem, forget my right hand."

Our claim to the land was neither political nor historical; rather, it was Biblical. The Torah states clearly that the land was given as a gift to the Jewish people. Just as Jews fought for the right to keep and observe the Torah, in the same vein they struggled to keep and develop the Land of Israel. This

was not always possible, as foreign monarchies and an array of invading armies throughout the centuries governed or controlled the land. Yet with all the obstacles, Jews always attempted to establish Jewish settlements known as moshavim on the land.

With all the success seen in the recent history of modern Israel in the past fifty years, the future of Israel is still a struggle. When following the news in Israel, it is quite clear that the situation is far from being peaceful and harmonious. The Temple still lies in ruin, and its neighbors continually threaten Israel. After all the thousands of years of wandering and suffering, it is high time for Jews to finally be able to feel safe and secure in their own homeland.

The 9th of Av is a day set aside for lamenting and mourning the destruction of Jerusalem's Temples and the subsequent suffering of the Jews. On this day we cry out to God and ask that He return His people and glory to the Holy Land.

This day should not be viewed as a day of melancholy; rather it is a day that should stir within us the deep longing for the rebuilding of the Temple and the coming of Moshiach.

When Moshiach comes, there will be a true and everlasting peace in Israel. Gone will be the hostility and animosity from surrounding nations. Respect will be restored to Israel and to Judaism. The study of Torah and "the knowledge of God will fill the land as water fills the ocean."

In essence these are days of hope, not despair. Maimonides writes that whoever laments the destruction of Jerusalem will merit seeing its rebuilding and its eventual return to grandeur. Maimonides goes further by saying that these days will inevitably be transformed into the happiest days of the year. By observing these days properly, we will come to celebrate the final and complete redemption through Moshiach. ☆

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Letter to the Editor

Editor's Note: Rachel Spangenthal is 5th grader at the Charlotte Jewish Day School. She was concerned when she found out that some friends might have to move away from Charlotte because there is no Jewish Middle School for the children. This is a letter she wrote to express her feelings.

"Why I'm writing a letter to you is because I want to have a Middle School. If the problem is money, I'm sure some people will want to help out. We are Jewish after all and we want children not to go to public school and forget everything they learned. Aren't we Jewish? Can't anything happen?"

"If we have a chance to teach Torah, I think we should take that chance. If we don't, it may hurt other people. For example, [I know a family who] love where they live. New troubles are coming for them as they might have to move. Just for a Jewish community. I hear that it's out of your reach, but please listen and ask the children. We have some things to say."

Sincerely,
Rachel Spangenthal

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