

A Weekend in Washington; Basketball in Rockville

By Amy Krakovitz Montoni

Just before Chanukah, No. 1 son's new basketball team from the American Hebrew Academy in Greensboro had some games scheduled at two Day Schools in Rockville, MD. With its proximity to Washington, DC, I decided to visit our nation's capital with No. 2 son.

Our trip started out poorly with a flight attendant calling in sick and our flight delayed 1-1/2 hours. But when the replacement finally appeared, the already weary travelers were gracious and appreciative. She even received a warm round of applause when the captain introduced her.

Upon arrival at Washington Reagan Airport, we whisked ourselves off to the car rental counter and I attempted to drive to our hotel.

Have you ever driven in Washington, DC? I got lost and back on track a total of four times, turning a 20-minute drive into a one-hour aggravation. It's these circle things, where you can't tell which spoke your street is turning off into, and even if you can, I challenge you to get in the correct lane at each light around the circle.

Once we finally arrived at our hotel, we decided to walk (an easy six blocks) to the White House. It was indeed an easy walk and if not for the weather (drizzly and cold) would have been lovely. We were too late for the White House tour but No. 2 son was just as thrilled to have his picture taken right out-

side.

When we attempted to continue our walk, we were stopped by a security guard at the driveway. A



No. 2 son at the White House in December.

long motorcade with two limousines and several SUVs were exiting the White House grounds. It was the Vice President, we were informed. He had been at the White House while the President had gone to Maryland. I missed the picture but No. 2 son had another moment of excitement.

On the other side on the White House, on a field known as "The Ellipse" stood a giant Chanukah menorah for the lights to be kindled. The one picture I took of the menorah came out looking like vaseline had been rubbed on the lens.

We walked in the cold drizzle up to the Washington Monument for a photo op as the monument is still closed to the public for renovations.

We spent the rest of the day, more than two hours, in the Gems, Minerals and Geology section of

the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. It was fascinating and beautiful. No. 2 son read every display, studied every gem, participated in every hands-on and interactive program. We know now that we need at least a week in Washington just to see what interests us at the Smithsonians.

That night the basketball teams from American Hebrew Academy were scheduled to play at the Charles Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville. I understand that there are over 1000 students at the school, which goes up to 12th grade. AHA has 77 students in 9th and 10th grades. What are the odds AHA will have a better team?

Well, apparently the odds are 50-50 because the girls' team won their first ever basketball game. The boys, and No. 1 son by extension, lost a dismal 84-12.

The next afternoon, they played at the Melvin Berman Hebrew Academy. Again, the girls won, and the boys lost, but not by such a devastating margin. The score the second day was 25-17.

AHA also brought their cheerleaders with them, who were enthusiastic and cute, and continued to keep the spirits of their teams up, even when they were falling behind (far behind).

One interesting note, the current coach at AHA, Phil Papier, was the former coach at Charles Smith JDS. They honored him between games and made the AHA family feel very lucky to have him on staff. ☆

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 Congregation Ohr HaTorah and Lubavitch of North Carolina

"TU BISHVAT: A TIME FOR RENEWAL"



One of the exciting holidays observed in Israel each winter is the New Year for Trees. The 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat has been designated by the Talmud as the Rosh Hashanah for trees. In Israel new trees are planted on this day, and many Jewish communities in the Diaspora celebrate by eating from the five fruits with which Israel is praised in the Torah. This year Tu B'Shevat falls on Monday, January 28.

One of the reasons that trees have been awarded a special celebration is because the Torah in the book of Deuteronomy compares humans to trees. And indeed there are many lessons learned from trees that when applied to humans serve us well.

The comparison between trees and humans begins with the planting of the tree and culminates with the final product of the delicious fruit produced by the tree that benefits mankind.

Planting a new tree requires much care and effort in order to ensure a healthy and productive tree. This includes daily watering and ensuring that the soil contains the right nutrients. As the tree grows, it needs pruning and support so that it will grow straight and sturdy. Healthy and deep roots help the tree survive harsh elements.

Similarly, with humans we must take extra care in the early years of the child to nurture him with the right values and in a proper environment to ensure his growth into a mature and productive adult.

Today more educators have come to the conclusion that the Torah value system that has existed within the Jewish community for thousands of years really works. The transmission of strong values in a sheltered and protected environment allows the child to grow and develop into a responsible and productive adult. Moreover, it allows the child to be confident in who he is and to be equipped with knowledge and a

sense of history.

As the roots of the young are firmly planted in their heritage, they have the ability to endure most of the harsh challenges facing today's youth. These young adults have the confidence and enthusiasm to contribute to an ever-changing society with their creativity and sense of self-assurance.

The success of Jewish survival is due to the responsibility that each generation feels towards the next generation. The Torah instructs parents to teach their children. By imparting Jewish knowledge, practice, and values to our children, we guarantee the sustenance and survival of Judaism.

At Tu B'Shevat, when we plant new trees, we experience a renewal of sorts. We see the new trees taking root and beginning to grow we think about a whole new generation of trees that will benefit the environment and society at large. As we nurture the young saplings, we reflect on our own renewal as Jews. We look at our children and realize that our young can achieve greatness, but it is up to us to help them.

It is our privilege and responsibility to give them the knowledge of our precious heritage, the God-given Torah, and to imbue them with the pride that we feel in our Judaism. The more time we spend investing in our children, the more productive they will be as they grow up.

Tu B'Shevat is a time that we think about Israel and its trees. After all, the holiday originated in Israel and is still observed today by planting new trees. I may add that trees and Israel are very much tied together.

Trees are a symbol of hope. Even after devastating forest fires that may destroy many trees, trees always make a comeback. There in the midst of ruin and destruction, one can see young saplings rising from the ground.

After years of hardship and destruction, we see Jewish life flourishing in Israel. Yes, even now as it has experienced the worst wave of terror since its inception, Jewish life is flourishing and thriving in the Holy Land. At this time more than ever, we must commit to the renewal and survival of Israel.

May this Tu B'Shevat bring true and everlasting peace to the Holy Land, and may the sweetness of its fruit allow us to savor the joys of life and all its blessings. ☆

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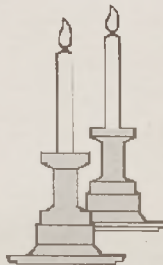
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Friday, January 4
5:05 PM

Friday, January 11
5:11 PM

Friday, January 18
5:18 PM

Friday, January 25
5:25 PM



This month's Tu B'Shevat cover is "Planting the Orange Grove," from Jerusalem around 1920.

Last month's Chanukah painting was by Arthur Szyk, 1948.

Both photos were provided by the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

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