

On Your Doorposts Fall 02

And Beyond Your Gates

Connecting to Israel...from Home

Six-year-old Noah Oberlander always will remember the view from his father's shoulders. The flood of Israeli flags. The podium so far away that messages delivered there were inaudible. And all those people. Surely, he estimated, he had never seen a crowd so large. Not even at a Rams game.

Even more, Noah will remember the great lengths his father went to that April day to provide such a view.

An early morning plane flight to Washington, D.C. A subway ride. Lots of walking to that place with all the people. Then, a few hours later, another walk, and another subway ride, and a plane flight home. Such effort taken to stand around and sing *Hatikva* with flag-waving strangers.

But his parents knew a trip to the national Israel Solidarity Rally would be worth the investment of time, money and energy. "More than anything, it was a chance to teach Noah that supporting Israel is a priority in our family," says his father, Michael. "It was hot and

crowded, and we couldn't hear the speakers, but that didn't matter. What mattered was that Noah was having that experience."

A Half-a-World Away

The Oberlanders, like so many families, are continually seeking ways to connect their children to Israel...without necessarily traveling there. Some families are not traveling now because of

the time and expense required...others because of safety concerns... and others – like the Oberlanders – because they are not ready to travel so far with young children. But many families have developed meaningful relationships with their Jewish homeland without leaving American soil.

Just ask Abby Schneider.

The 18-year-old worked summer evenings scooping ice cream at Baskin Robbins. But while she worked, her mind was seven hours ahead, 6,400 miles away, on things more significant than mint chip. After all, she had people to worry about – a teenage "brother and



Noah and Michael Oberlander stand together with Israel at a rally in Washington, D.C.

(continued on back cover)

Inside this Issue

Connecting to Israel...from Home • Outdoor Judaism
Interactions: Programs that Work

Interactions: Programs that Work

For more than 5,000 years, the Jewish family has perpetuated our traditions. And in recent years, area synagogues and temples have made Jewish family education a priority. Each issue of **Doorposts** features family education programs that have successfully promoted intergenerational interactions in the St. Louis Jewish community.

A Family Pilgrimage – The landscape was surely different. The climate was cooler. And tootsies were a bit more comfortable, thanks to the creation of rubber-soled shoes. But the intentions of kafia-clad men, women and children were the same last October as their ancestors' had been in days of old.

Arms loaded with fruits, vegetables and building supplies, more than 20 families from Central Reform Congregation set out on a pilgrimage – on Missouri soil, no less – to celebrate the ingathering of the harvest. At their “Jerusalem” destination, adults built a dwelling large enough for all 90 participants, and children decorated the sukkah with hand-crafted fruits and vegetables.

And since no biblical reenactment is complete without a visit from Sara, the matriarch arrived with messages about hospitality and the environment. She mesmerized children with stories of a time before automobiles and Nintendo. She gave parents permission to experiment with their home celebrations of Sukkot and other holidays. And she taught both to take care of the land that sustains them. Take a pilgrimage with your families. For more information, call Virginia Horowitz, 314-361-3919.

For the Love of God – Twenty pre-teen artisans and their parents sat around tables at B'nai El Congregation engrossed in their work. Theirs was sacred work, to say the least. After all, the clay they were sculpting would ultimately become a repository for holy text, a mezuzah created for the love of God.

But the sixth-graders and their families were well-prepared for the

task. During prior weeks, they had studied the *V'ahavta* text that is encapsulated on the doorposts of Jewish homes. They had learned about the religious laws that make a scribe's work so painstaking, and then observed as one meticulously demonstrated his letter-writing technique. And they had contemplated everyday deeds that show devotion to God.

In the end, parents and teens took home a brightly colored masterpiece for their own doorposts...and a deeper understanding of the sacred text within. Help your families create mezuzot “For the Love of God.” Call Shera Kafka, 314-432-6393.

Arts and Identities – The challah covers at Congregation Shaare Emeth are anything but ordinary. Each cloth tells the Jewish story of the families of seventh and eighth-grade students who gathered together on two afternoons to explore their Jewish identities through the arts.

Preparation began weeks before the program with workshops that taught students to dance, write, paint and sculpt their interpretations of Torah and Judaism. So creating a block stamp with their parents to symbolize their family's Jewish perspective was no overwhelming task. Many students even guided their parents through the process. The finished products were ironed onto velvet and mounted on linen. The result: exquisite challah covers for the congregation and for each participating family – gifts that connect each family to their congregation and conjure memories of quality family time spent exploring Jewish identity. Teach your families to explore their Jewish identities through the arts. Call Ronnie Brockman, 314-569-1273. ●

Outdoor Judaism

Judaism teaches that we have a sacred obligation to safeguard all of God's creation. In fact, even the first human was instructed by God to “work and guard” the earth and to protect its creatures.

Today, most of us don't individually till the land to put food on our tables. So it's no wonder we have wandered far from the intimacy our ancestors had with the earth.

Step outside to a world of Jewish values and ecological lessons. It's never too late to help your children develop a relationship with the earth, to gain a sense of wonder and gratitude, and to understand their responsibility to the world. Try some of these memory-making outdoor activities.

Blessing Trek

Take your family on a hike at a nearby park or trail. At the start of the trail, recite the beginning of the *Amidah* prayer that thanks God for the gift of living in our wondrous world. “We thank you, Adonai, our God, and God of our fathers and mothers for...”

Then start walking. Along the way, complete the prayer with thoughts that come to mind: “for chirping birds,” “for fragrant wildflowers,” “for rolypollies,” “for comfortable shoes,” and so on. When you have finished your trek, conclude with the words of the traditional prayer: “...and for our lives, which depend upon your hand, and for your miracles and your goodness, which are with us at every moment: evening, morning and noon.”

Do the Zoo

Noah built an ark and took pairs of all animals onboard – an act that preserved each species. Zoos today are like modern arks, dedicated, in part, to the preservation of animal species and the prevention of *Tzar Ba'Alei Chayim* (cruelty to animals). Take a family trip to a local zoo, farm or wildlife conservation area. Bring along a Hebrew dictionary and a camera. At each habitat, take a photo and learn the Hebrew word for the animal living there. Later, you can make your own Hebrew picture dictionary.

Chag Sameach al Natural

Take your next family stroll with a basket in hand. Fill it with wild flowers, weeds and grasses. When you get home, use an old phone book to press your selections. Start at the back of the book, pressing items at intervals of 50 pages apart. Place a brick or another heavy object on top. When your collection has dried, use a glue stick or diluted white glue to arrange them on homemade cards for Sukkot, Hanukkah and other holidays. Include with your greetings this prayer: *Baruch Atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, she'kacha lo b'olamo. Blessed are you, Eternal our God, who has such as these in Your world.* ●



Connecting to Israel...from Home

(continued from front cover)

sister” who stayed with her this summer as part of a counselor exchange program sponsored by the Jewish Federation’s Partnership 2000 and coordinated by Central Agency for Jewish Education. This fall, while Abby begins her first year at Northwestern University, her friends Dvir and Liat will begin preparations for the army.

“They live half-a-world away, and they have more responsibilities than I do. But they’re just like me,” Abby explains. “They’re kids, and they like to have fun. And when you think about it that way, Israel isn’t just a foreign country. It’s a place where kids and families live.”

Sharing Homes...and Hearts

Dozens of St. Louis families gain similar insights each year when Israeli visitors stay in their homes. Partnership 2000

sponsors visits from Israeli teens and adults living in the area of Yokneam/Megiddo, just east of Haifa. And next August, hundreds of teenage athletes throughout Israel will visit St. Louis to participate in the Jewish Community Center Maccabi Games.

Most host families attest that their perspectives change drastically because of the intimate relationships formed. Even families with young children are indelibly affected, as parents watch their pre-schoolers lean over world maps or croon newly learned Hebrew songs with their Israeli guests.

As for Abby, she and her brother watch the news and read the paper differently now that they have friends in Israel, say their mother, Jamie. “Dvir and Liat put a face on Israel for them...for all of us,” she says. ●

Your family can connect to Israel without leaving American soil. Here’s how:

Rally On – Take your children to solidarity rallies, sing-a-longs and other events to show them your unwavering support for Israel. For information about local or national rallies, call Jewish Community Relations Council, 314-432-0020. For information about community-wide events, call Central Agency for Jewish Education, 314-432-0020.

Bring Israel into Your Home – Offer to host an Israeli counselor in July 2003 or a visiting athlete during the 2003 Maccabi Games, August 10-15, 2003. Or open your home to an Israeli adult visiting as part of Jewish Federation’s Partnership 2000. To host a counselor, call Jeff Lasday, 314-442-3750. To host a Maccabi athlete, call Ron Siegel, 314-442-3157. To learn more about Partnership 2000, call Sara Winkelman, 314-432-0020.

Get a Passport – You know that an Israel experience will enhance your child’s Jewish identity. A Passport to Israel account will help you save for a future trip. For more information, call Marcia Mermelstein, 314-432-0020.

Shop Israel – You can surf the web with your children...and help the Israeli economy at the same time. Many retailers sell Israeli products over the internet. You can begin at www.shopinIsrael.com.

An Extra Shine – Light a third candle each Shabbat as an expression of hope for Israel’s future. Your family can even create a prayer for peace to recite as you light it.

Empty Your Pockets – At the end of each day, let your children deposit your loose change into a tzedakah box designated for Israel. When the box is full, trade in the coins in for a cashier’s check. You can contribute to Jewish Federation’s Israel Emergency Campaign or another Israel-related organization.



Central Agency for Jewish Education
12 Millstone Campus Drive
St. Louis, Missouri 63146

Doorposts is made possible through a grant from the Henry and Gladys Crown Charitable Income Trust honoring the memory of Shirlee Green through the Jewish Federation of St. Louis. For additional copies of Doorposts, or to add your name to the mailing list, call Joan Wolchansky, 314-432-0020, or email jwolchansky@cajestl.org Project Director: Joan Wolchansky Editor: Patty Bloom Design: 501creative