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Moishe Moment

12 messages

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Shabbat Shalom Moishe House!
Shabbat Pinchas
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This weeks Moishe Moment comes from Moishe House Orange County Resident Jordan Pelavin. Jordan loves Jewish engagement, creating communities, and above all else turtles. Originally from Bowie, MD, Jordan will happily extol the virtues of Old Bay and the Chesapeake while basking in beautiful California sunsets. She cares deeply about political engagement, pop music and libraries and loves working with kids as well as her peers.

My Judaism lives in community
By Jordan Pelavin

It's Friday night at 7:00 pm and I'm in the back of a room as big as a football field trying to find my father. The room has about 5000 people and 7 screens that are each so big that they seem overwhelming individually; together they seem insane. On the stage there is a Rabbi and a cantor and a choir with a dozens of people from dozens of states and a few countries. There are graphics on the screens and words in Hebrew and words in English and pictures of temples and camps where people prayed in much smaller numbers then 5000, but still in communities. Still together.

It's Saturday morning, much too early, and I'm standing in a crowded camp dining hall talking about Torah to a crowd of about a hundred 6th graders. We're talking about the week's Torah portion, and all the ways it ties in to their lives at home and our lives at camp. About family traditions and ancient prayers and modern parallels. We're laughing some, because sixth graders are silly, but we're having real discussions about text and about religion. I love it, and I love them, and I love sharing this experience together.

It's Wednesday night, I'm 17 and I am late for Hebrew school. Soccer practice went long and there was traffic, and I'm running in to class, sweaty and panting, while the Rabbi is talking about moral imperatives. My class is small—a dozen kids if we all show up—and everyone says “hi” while I settle in for an hour of debate and learning and making fun of the Rabbi's jokes. Our class had been together since kindergarten and now, a decade later, we know the arguments that everyone is going to make. Adam is going to talk about individualism—about self-reliance and self-betterment. Jimmy is going to talk about communal consciousness- about improvement for the sake of the community. We're going to talk and to debate, and then do it all again next week.

It's Saturday night and I'm on the beach, staring at a bonfire with marshmallow on my fingertips. Someone is playing a guitar and I'm singing the words to the Havdalah prayers, surrounded by a community I've grown to treasure. The wind is chilly and the fire is warm, and we're just a few steps from the ocean, watching as its waves meet the shore. I can feel the sand in my sandals and I can smell the smoke. I am content. With arms around each other we sing and pray and welcome in a new week.

My religion has given me a community -- many communities, actually; making up one larger community -- that I am thankful to be a part of and a history that I can feel proud of. It has given me adventures and experiences and people who mentor me and those I can help grow. It has given me answers and questions, and the ability to feel a little less uncomfortable with the unknown. It has given me homes and friends and purpose. Tradition and pride.

So this erev Shabbat, like so many before it, even if I don't get to light my candlesticks I will be carrying the light of my community in my heart. Grateful for the people who have come before me, hopeful about the people around me who are treading new ground, and always grounded in the thousands of years and thousands of minds that came before me. Me, on the beach or at camp or a synagogue in the suburbs or a hotel plenary room, surrounded by community. Because that's where my Judaism lives.

Shabbat Shalom!
Your Moishe House Mishpacha