



Eighteen Trees in the Time of Corona

New subject.

This past week I took a group of teens ages 14-17 to GreenGale Farms. This Tu B'shvat (Jewish Arbor Day) field trip was to teach the students a bit about nature and farming. We had a tour of this majestic farm stopping to pet some of the animals and play Israeli games that taught students about the holiday. But the highlight was when we planted 18 trees in an area I immediately dubbed "the CNT Orchard." I don't know whether that name will stick, but I do know the students will remember this event for a long time to come.

Rare is the opportunity for people to get out of their comfort zones. We would much prefer to simply go to the grocery store and purchase our fruits without giving much thought to who planted the trees. This goes for the vegetables on our plates and the milk in our glasses. Our young people are more connected to their video games than they are to nature.

And yet, as the students heard about the importance of trees and fighting climate change, they stopped and opened their eyes and ears. Hands went up, questions popped up from a place of deep curiosity that many may not have realized they had.

I had to chuckle though when the old world and the new world came together. There is a cow on the ranch that is featured on TikTok with millions of followers!

What I wouldn't give for a bit of that cow's ability to attract an audience!

Generations often have a hard time talking to each other. Our worlds are so different. Some grew up before the age of computers. Others remember when there were only a few TV channels. Social Media wasn't even a thing. TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram are just words that cause one generation to listen in bewilderment and another to look forward to the next posting. Becoming a social media influencer is the dream of thousands of young people. And who hasn't wanted to create their own podcast?

It would seem we have more ways of communicating and fewer ways of listening.

What are we to do? I suggest we look for those moments when we can plant trees. Trees remind us that what we have is the result of actions done by a prior generation. Planting trees is an act of faith that they will mature into a world that will appreciate their shade, find nourishment from their yield, and shelter from their lumber.

If nothing else, these city folk students learned a little something from their toil. As their hands touched the earth, they understood the connection that is too often missed between today and tomorrow. As they watered the saplings, they began to understand that knowledge could be gained from something other than the internet. And as they looked at the small orchard sprung from their hard work, they learned that wisdom comes from experience.

As parents came to pick up the students and they hopped in their cars, I saw that they immediately put on their headsets or took out their phones.

But, I still felt good about the day, because for a moment we focused on a new subject. And the lessons learned will stay with them long after the song changes or video view passes by.

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