



THE ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE

by Daneel Schaechter

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Hey. I'm Daneel Schaechter, a freshman at Penn, and I spent last year (2009-2010) at Orayta. This Hanukkah I've had some of my most memorable experiences so far at Penn by Hannukah-caroling, that is going around to all of the freshman dorms with a bunch of friends and spreading the Hanunukah spirit with a guitar and a recorder. I'm active in a grassroots organization called Heart to Heart, whose mission is to include uninvolved students in Jewish life by having them share meaningful Jewish experiences with their peers, by having *Shabbat* meals, Hannukah Candlelightings, and Passover seders.

I realized that especially as a freshman, it's a great opportunity to meet other freshman who are also starting out and looking for connections, a community, and a place where they feel welcomed and accepted. Coming from a year in Israel, I already had a head-start on all of that and wanted to help others find their place in Jewish life at Penn. I soon realized it doesn't take that much - simply being friendly, welcoming, and loving of all Jews goes so far.

When a few of my friends said they were going to spread the Hannukah spirit, I had to join; I knew that it'd be awesome. There were maybe 15 of us there and we split up into smaller groups and proceeded with a large platter of sufganyot, potato latkes, menorahs. Our group had a guitar and a recorder and went around singing the classic Hannukah songs-*Maoz Tzur*, I Have a Little Dreidel, and Adam Sandler's Hannukah Song.

We knocked on people's doors and went through the halls, handing out Hannukah food, while singing and wishing everyone "Happy Hannukah." We found Jews who had never lit a menorah or heard Hannukah songs and those who had as children. We cherished many of their first Hannukah experiences and made them as special as we could. We invited them to light with us downstairs in the lobby and we celebrated many *Shehechyanu* moments with them.

We invited some of our new friends to *Shabbat* Hannukah Friday night meals for them to experience *Shabbat* for the first time and explained Kiddush and some of the ideas behind the traditions at the meal. All in all, Heart to Heart is an amazing initiative that's really worth getting involved in at whatever college campus you will find yourself next year.