



## A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE ON CHALLENGE

by Akiva Carr

There are many words I could use to describe my year in Israel so far. Fun, inspirational, enlightening, educational, the list could go on for pages. But of all those words, there is one word that I am going to focus on, as I feel it is the by far most important: Challenging.



Spending a year far away from family, friends, home-cooked food, in dormitories that are not quite as comfortable as what I, *boruch Hashem*, have at home; with a large group of boys that I had never met before, all from a country I've never been to; and all of this in a country so vastly different from my own. And yet, it has been possibly the most enjoyable two months of my life so far. This begs the question: How could it be that with so many 'cons', I could experience such immense growth and empowerment?

The answer, as complicated one might try to make it out to be, is shamefully simple. These difficulties, these hardships, these challenges are exactly what makes the year so special!! Indeed, these are what make the year so inspirational, so enlightening, and so educational. For how could one grow from something that is comfortable? In the words of Rav Binny: "Comfort is the kiss of the devil". Without being given the opportunity to face challenges, we would stagnate, like a river that no longer runs.

This week we heard a *sicha* from the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Lau. He spoke about his autobiography, which has recently been translated into English. Rabbi Lau is not only a great Rabbi; he also is a survivor of one of the greatest challenges our nation has faced – the holocaust. When he spoke about some of his experiences, I realized two things: First, we are truly blessed to be able to complain about yeshiva food, for no challenge we could face could begin to compare to those of previous generations; and second, that Rabbi Lau wasn't born the amazing man that stood before us. Rather, he reached this immense level through overcoming countless challenges, with the miraculous help of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. But Rabbi Lau is by no means the only example of this. Throughout *Tanach* we see the power and results of overcoming challenges. After repeatedly

'passing tests' of faith, *Avram* sealed a covenant with *Hashem*, and was 'promoted', so to speak, through the name *Avraham*. *Yaakov Avinu* had to wrestle with an angel before he earned the great name *Yisroel*. *Yosef* had to resist the wiles of the wife of *Potiphar*, and thus face an even greater challenge, and his success brought him the name *Yosef Hatzadik*. In all of these stories, overcoming challenge is the common denominator. Through overcoming the obstacles that were placed before them by *Hashem*, our ancestors were able to grow, and were thus able to accept the immense responsibility and privilege of leading the Jewish People.

With this in mind, it is only possible to come to the conclusion that the only way I can get the very most out of this year, this amazing opportunity I have been granted, is not only by facing challenges head on, but by embracing them with enthusiasm, and realizing that there is no challenge *Hashem* would give us that we are not able to overcome. May we all merit to be strengthened and inspired to overcome any challenge that is placed before us, and to grow into leaders of the Jewish people, bringing us ever closer to the days of *Moshiach*.