



STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Adam Schlüssel

When I visited Orayta last February, I felt confident that this was the right place for me. Despite that, I was still nervous as I anticipated the year ahead. I was worried about learning all day and whether I would make good friends. Now, after only being in Yeshiva for two months, those fears seem ridiculous; this place is incredible! In high school, I would dread a “double period” of *gemara* (which only lasted 1 hour and 20 minutes). In Yeshiva I look forward to getting out of bed because I know three hours of *gemara* with Rav Dovid await me. This excitement toward learning is something I had previously only heard rabbis speak about; I never would have thought I would truly enjoy it. As for the guys, I couldn't have been more wrong. I'd like to share a little story about my *Yam L'Yam* experience...



Let me start off by saying I never walked more in my life! About half the guys participated in *Yam L'Yam*, a hike from the *Kinneret* to the Mediterranean Sea (approximately 85 km) in three days. The first day is the toughest; we went from *Ginosar* (right next to *Tevariya*) to *Meron*. This was the hardest trail I have ever hiked; it seemed like an endless path that only went uphill; I ran out of water by the end of the hike (and had brought 5.5 liters). When we finally reached *Meron*, it was already dark and cold and we still could not find the entrance to the city. Finally, we discovered an *uphill* path (obviously!). On the way up, we passed the *kever* of *Rebbe Tarfon* (a *Tanah* mentioned in the *Mishna*), which was spooky because of the story about him being robbed by bandits while on the road at night. So with bandits on my mind, we climbed into the city. Upon entering, we didn't know where we could find a park in which we could sleep, so we found a *tisch* and asked them where to go. They proceeded on inviting us in and gave us lemonade and cookies. The men then pointed us in the direction of a soup kitchen for travelers where we received a hot meal and lots of water. After dinner we found a nice park to sleep in and crashed!

We woke up at 5am and saw a minor stampede of dogs and a cow running down the road in the city, not a usual scene to wake up to... After *davening*,

we left *Merom* and climbed up and down *Har Meron*. Day Two was mostly a blur, we walked almost double the distance we did on Day One but the terrain was much easier. We learned our lesson after the first day, so we finished the day walking on a highway as the sun was setting. It was beautiful - but probably nicer when you're not exhausted and achy! We arrived in *Ma'alot* just as it got dark and quickly found a park and were asleep by 9 PM. At 3am, the sprinklers went off and soaked us all! We ran for cover on the cement. After lying in my wet sleeping bag for a few hours, I finally fell asleep. I'm unsure if it was the sleeping on cement, being cold and wet all night, or having walked for two days straight, but I woke up with swollen, painful, unbendable knees...thank G-d for Advil. We took off bright and early again and walked down to *Nachal Cziv*, a gorgeous hike next to a river. We followed the river the whole day and took a swimming break at one point and turned it into a very cold *mikvah*. We had lunch at the end of the *nachal* and walked as a group, holding hands and singing the last four km to the Mediterranean. When I signed up for *Yam L`Lyam*, I thought it would be a nice hike with a bunch of cool kids with whom I was friendly. I had no idea we all would become so close. Those three days created an amazing bond between us. After spending the next day in bed massaging my feet and dealing with my blisters, we all went out for a celebratory dinner.

We have accomplished so much in only two months; I can't wait to see what the rest of this year will bring both in terms of learning and lifelong friendships...

Shabbat Shalom!