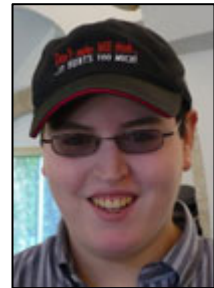




A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Ariel Sobin

My name is Ariel Sobin and I am a student currently learning in Orayta. I love being in Israel, and I am very happy that I picked Orayta as the Yeshiva I would spend a year at.



I have met many people from many different backgrounds, both in Yeshiva and around Israel in general. But one thing I never understood was why there are so many different types of Jews. There are Reform Jews, Conservative Jews, Orthodox Jews, Chassidic Jews, and many other types of Jews in addition to the four I just listed. There are also different groups of Jews within each main category of Jews.

However, there are certain times during the year when Jews from different backgrounds join together and observe the same thing. Two examples of these times are *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. On these High Holidays, an overwhelming number of not so observant Jews go to their synagogues and pray, even if they don't usually go during the year. These are the main times during the year when Jews from all different types of backgrounds are united.

However, over *Sukkot*, I found another time when many Jews in Israel become one and pray together. That was the huge *Birkat Kohanim* at the *Kotel* over *Chol Hamoed Sukkot*. The area by the *Kotel* was packed with hundreds if not thousands of Jews coming from all different backgrounds. Some were there because it was an amazing sight to see; but many were there because they felt a connection to what was occurring. While I was at the *Kotel* on the day of the *Birkat Kohanim*, I went around and asked people what type of Jew they considered themselves to be. The variety of answers I got was mind boggling. The majority of the answers were Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, and Chassidic. However, other answers included Conservative, Reform, Charedi, Conservadox, and Reconstructionist. I was truly amazed at how many different types of Jews showed up.

If the Jews can join together at certain times, why can't they join together for good? Then there wouldn't be so many different types of Jews. I think that the answer to this question lies in our inability to compromise when it comes to

defining what is allowed and what isn't. Each group of Jews has a set of beliefs; they don't want to let go of any of those beliefs; nor do they want to compromise with any other group to change their beliefs. Each group wants the Jews to be united - but they each want all the Jews to abide by the rules of their own group. Therein lies the problem; nobody is willing to compromise.

In my opinion, the reason that Jews of all different backgrounds are united on the High Holidays is because it just so happens that each group of Jews believes that going to *shul* on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* is the right thing to do.

I hope that someday in the near future, all Jews will be united for good, and that they will all follow one set of laws corresponding to one set of beliefs that is accepted by everyone. Then there will be no more fighting, no more stereotyping, and no more divisions between the various sects of Judaism.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ariel Sobin