



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Aaron Wilson



The leaves don't change color in the old city. Well, to be fair, there aren't really any leaves here. But everything else seems to be pointing toward the fact that autumn is upon us here in Jerusalem. Our narrow stone streets, filled just a few weeks ago with yellow hat wearing tourists in t-shirts, and warm, heavy summer air, are now empty, save for the chilly breeze that seems to pick up momentum as it whips through the alleyways. The daylight that seemed endless before *Succot* now fades quickly from the windows of the *Beit Midrash* over the course of a half hour *Tefillah Shiur*. After two months of nothing but dry heat, much needed rain now wanders into the five day forecast as it pleases.

For most, if not all of us, this is the first time we are experiencing this change of seasons in Israel. "No one is going on ze bus wissout tree liters of waterr!" We've almost all heard this, having been on vacations or summer programs in Israel, when the weather is Israelish. With the onset of fall, and the reality that the weather actually changes here, comes the realization that we're actually living here. For the first time, we don't have a flight that leaves in a few days or weeks. We don't have an itinerary full of day trips and hikes.

I wouldn't say that we're entirely independent here, but this is the first time we're living on our own, away from home. If, for anyone, it isn't the first time, I'd say it's the first time they're living 6000 miles from home. It's the first time we're giving Israelis directions to the *Kotel*. It's the first time we're regularly going food shopping in a tiny Armenian market. It's the first time we're calculating our weekly expenditures in *shekalim*.

When I was deciding whether or not to come to Orayta for the year, I figured that at the very least I would have the experience of living in Israel for a significant period of time. If I got nothing else out of the year, I would have the opportunity to mature, half way around the world, become fluent in a language, and spend a couple hundred days in the Old City of Jerusalem. I can gladly say that I have not had to fall back on my "at leasts." With the change in seasons has come the insight that my "at leasts" are far from the most that I'm getting from my time here.