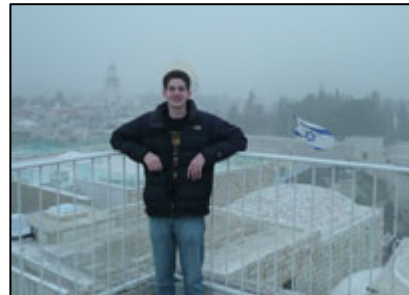




THE ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE

by Daniel Ackerman

The Rabbi's were correct when they said that taking the Yeshiva from Jerusalem to *chutz la`aretz* (outside the land of Israel) would be the true challenge. It's been 18 days out of Orayta, and the shift back into Florida is definitely being felt.



I never realized how difficult it would be to keep up the Judaism which I had developed within the cocoon of Yeshiva. Although the beginning of that year was rough, by the end I found myself devouring 200+ page books in 24 hour periods of time. When it came down to the wire with 2 weeks left, many of us began to think what we would bring home with us, commit to, and keep up with. These questions sounded easy! When I was still in Yeshiva, the answers sounded like a piece of cake! I'd keep Kosher, *Shabbat*, *Chabad* in college, learn everyday, *Tefillin* in the morning, *Daven* a little here, a little there ... It sounded so easy, I would hit the ground running, coming back to America. I was mistaken.

The transition back home was immense in the sense that we're not in Israel anymore. Everything is so different: the environment, the walk, the talk, the dress, the act, and also what you see on t.v. It's not really a shock though, because it's exactly how I left it. And to tell you the truth though, honestly, I really like it.

The things I said I wanted to do, initially kind of just slipped away within the first few days. Not because I didn't want to, but because of the sheer seduction of being back home and doing what used to be routine, even if those are things that aren't so worthwhile. Video games, the hustle and bustle of neurotic everyday life in Brooklyn, sitting with friends being bored not having anything to do, knowing that you're bored and still not doing anything, Internet ... Sometimes, I don't even realize when I'm wasting my time! It's only after the fact that I wasted time that I realize I could have picked up a *Chumash*. I know I'm being real here. I know each and every one of us can think of things that are really just a waste of time, even though they're fun.

A year ago we all left our comfort zone, but we created a new one and loved it. Now, as we come back to what we always knew, what are we going to do? This doesn't just go for Yeshiva, but can be a paradigm for anything else in life. But specifically for us boys who went through the Yeshiva world with Orayta, getting a taste of *Torah* in its purest and most pristine form, what are we going to do now? We can't just sit and learn in the *Bet Midrash* like we used to, but nor can we sink back into the life that felt so comfortable! Rather we must take what we learned and apply it to the life we used to know, thus elevating it to the life we now want. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the places we are going back to. But what *is* wrong is when we don't apply the *Torah* that so transformed us from the people we were yesterday to the people we are today. You are either moving forwards or backwards; there is no such thing as standing still. And by moving forwards, I also mean by helping others. Our great forefather Jacob was the first to have this balance. Besides learning in the tent, he also went out into the field, the world.

Although this might seem daunting, there is a way to go about it. All you have to do is know yourself, what you can handle; and then add a little more. I'm sure all the guys out of Orayta are working on this, but for me, here is what I do. Since I landed in America, I make sure I sit and learn for at least an hour every day, don't mix milk and meat, watch where I eat, say *Brachot* on my food with the *Bracha* card in my wallet (and get very upset when I forget ...), have *shabbat* with something to say at the table, invite all my friends over for *shabbat*, and most importantly, I try to be fully conscious of making my everyday life in *chutz la`arets*, a little bit holier.

Shabbat Shalom, and don't get too neurotic!