



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Eitan Cooper



The Wall sits serenely and silently in the background, but at its foot is a wild, energetic sea of green. Hundreds of excited people have gathered in the holiest city in the world, at its holiest site, to partake in a holy event. This Wall has seen much history in the past two thousand years; it has survived devastating destruction and blazing battles, witnessed joyous celebration and mournful services. It has received the hopeful prayers of millions and has served as the ultimate source of comfort. But somehow, this event is even more awesome than what the Wall represents. This Tekes (ceremony) truly takes center stage, with the Wall serving as its backdrop.

Last Thursday, I was privileged to witness a Tekes Hashba'ah (swearing in ceremony), along with three other Orayta students and hundreds of other Jews from all walks of life. While learning sefer Yehoshua during a chevruta on the roof of the Orayta building, we heard loud music and spirited singing. We soon realized that later that evening there would be hundreds of people sworn into the Nachal brigade of the IDF. After a quick dinner, we ran over to a balcony overlooking the Kotel, eager to witness this event for the first time.

As the sun set, the ceremony began. Five platoons of soldiers (approximately 400 men and women), along with their families, friends and onlookers had packed the Kotel Plaza. A trumpet blared, and the commanders of the platoons and of the brigade marched in. A Ner Zikaron, was lit in order to honor the sacrifices of the millions of Jews who have fallen throughout our long history. The evening then proceeded with a series of short speeches by high ranking officers. Some spoke of commitment and sacrifice, and others thanked the parents for allowing their children to fight. One of the speakers even quoted lines directly from the section of Yehoshua we had been learning just a few hours ago. The evening ended with the soldiers shouting, at the top of their lungs, "Ani Nishba! Ani Nishba! Ani Nishba!" (I Swear! I Swear! I Swear!), as well as a singing of Hatikva.

We learned this week with Rabbi Aaron that we call our prayer book a siddur because the order of our tefilot is crucial to the success of our connection with Hashem. Similarly, every facet of the evening seemed to be planned to perfection. Through the progression of the program, we were able to remember the past, celebrate the present, and hope for the future. I am truly thankful to have been able to witness a Tekes Hashba'ah, and strongly urge every one who visits Israel to try and experience it for themselves.

Shabbat Shalom,
Eitan Cooper