



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Ilan Cohn

Having spent our first "Out *Shabbat*" with family, *Rebbeim*, or tagging along with friends, we returned Saturday night for *Slichot*, Orayta style. This meant meaningful explanations, stories, and, of course, a few good *nigunim*. Since it was a late night, our *Rebbeim* had some compassion and let us sleep an extra hour on Sunday. Sunday morning, as we walked into class, we thought we were going to settle into our schedule for the rest of the week.

Boy, were we wrong. After a full day of new topics and ideas on Sunday and Monday, a special night *sefer* at Rabbi Aaron's house with ice cream and snacks on Monday night, many of us went out to Ben Yehuda, out to visit friends, or even just to sit in the square and relax. At about 11:15, many of us noticed students from other schools and programs simultaneously looking at their phones. Many looked confused, some surprised, and concerned. No matter their reaction, a significant number started leaving, presumably back towards their dorms. A couple of minutes later, we received a text message from Ov, a dorm counselor, that read: "*Pigua* in town. Back to dorms asap. Text *madrich*." Slightly shaken, we head back to the dorms, text messaging our dorm counselors to let them know where we were and that we were OK, and even heard a few wild rumors in the streets about what had happened. We gathered in the dorms, checked that everyone was safe, and many of us crowded around a radio to listen to what had actually occurred. A few of us were quite shaken up, and having nothing else to do the rest of the night, we chatted for a while, then got a good night's sleep.

The next morning, we fought back in the only way we knew how: we went on with our daily lives. While those that were injured were on our minds, we had a meaningful day, spending the morning at Latrun, celebrating the successes and remembering the losses of the armored corps of the I.D.F. From there we went to the shore in Ashdod and relaxed by playing football, playing catch with baseballs and Frisbees, burying Daniel Hammerschlag (A.K.A. "Schlag") in the sand, and enjoying the warm, wavy waters of the Mediterranean, followed by an Israeli style barbeque on the beach. While the day was used to get a bit of a break and recharge our proverbial batteries, Rav Binny and Rav Moish never missed an opportunity to make important points, making connections to ideas and stories from *Tanach* and Jewish thought.

Wednesday and Thursday were both full days, and as we delve deeper into ideas of Jewish philosophy, mysticism, and studies of *Gemara* and *Tanach*, we

realize what a wild ride we have ourselves in for. In reality, with all of the mind-blowing ideas and subjects that we learn, it is impossible for anyone to actually settle into anything, as our past perceptions are constantly turned upside down. In the end, we did return back to our normal lives. If you can call our lives normal. Intriguing, demanding, amazing and often bewildering – yes. But normal – definitely not.