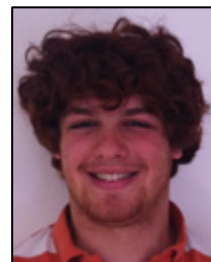




STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Joel Goldschlag



The first week at Yeshivat Orayta was somewhat of a blur for me. Rav Binny kept us moving every moment of the day, so that we would not succumb to the evil inclinations of sleeping during the day and staying up all night worshipping the gods of jetlag. While we all may have looked like a collection of Jewish zombies, in retrospect, I for one am quite grateful for my non-nocturnal schedule. We had a *tiyellet* (a term I made up for a *tiyul* which is too short and painless to be a full *tiyul*) and an amazing water hike/swim. But it wasn't until Friday that I was able to slow down and have a moment that was really meaningful.

We davened *Kabbalat Shabbat* on the roof during the beautiful sunset, facing the Temple Mount. As a musician, I have always been a sucker for *Kabbalat Shabbat*, but this one stuck out as different to me because of one moment. As we arrived at the *Amidah* for *ma'ariv*, everyone fell silent. At that moment the prayer call for "*Salat al-Layl*" (or Muslim *ma'ariv*) rang out. I have been to Israel countless times, so visiting the old city and hearing the prayer calls was not a new experience, but this time it was different. It used to always be background noise, an annoyance I wish I didn't have to hear all the time. This time was entirely different. I heard Yeshivat HaKotel singing through the end of *Kabbalat Shabbat* from behind us, the prayer call bouncing off the stones from every direction, and I realized that at that moment, 30,000 Muslims and 3,000 Jews were all praying at the same time. We were all praying to God, and the old city of Jerusalem was filled with a tangible holiness.

It's interesting how a prayer call from a different religion could have such a strong spiritual effect on me, but now that I have had a few weeks to think about it, it makes perfect sense. This is a holy city. Worshiping God is a holy act, no matter how it is done. When we all unite to talk to God as humanity, not as individuals, or even as religions, imagine how much we can accomplish. All that I can ask in these crazy times is that as a collective, we all pray for peace.

Shabbat Shalom.