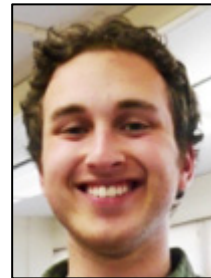


STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Jacob Rosenbaum



I have had the good fortune to have visited Israel three times before my year at Orayta: on a school trip, a family trip, and a summer program. However, I feel that this is my first visit in which I have been able to have meaningful and extended interactions with members of the Israeli population. Most of these exchanges (i.e. a shopkeeper chasing me down after forgetting my cell phone in his shop for the third consecutive time) have left me with the conviction that this is, indeed, an *Eretz Chemdah* (land of fraternal love).

However, there is one experience that stands out from all of the others, an experience that made me realize how special the Jewish Homeland really is: the experience of being at the Gilad Shalit tent after the announcement of a prisoner swap deal that would return him to Israel, ending Gilad and the Shalit family's ordeal.

I arrived at the tent at around ten o'clock with a friend from Orayta. At this point, there were "only" a few hundred people gathered around the tent, and it was quite a task to reach the barrier in front of the tent itself. After pushing through many members of the media with reporters ranging from the *BBC* to *Haaretz*, my friend and I reached a group of Israelis waving flags and singing "*Am Yisrael Chai*," "*Acheinu*," and other songs full of camaraderie.

Eventually, Noam Shalit (Gilad's father), rose to address those assembled, and the crowd immediately lowered its roar to a respectful, quiet buzz (well, as quiet as Israelis ever seem to get). There was simply an ecstatic atmosphere around the tent during Mr. Shalit's address, and I have never felt more unified with the Jewish community than I was during that address.

To me, this experience is strongly reminiscent of this week's *parsha*, *Parshat Vayeira*. Just as *Avraham* and *Sarah* made the three *malachim* who visited their tent feel welcome, so too did no Jew at the Shalit tent feel unwelcome on that warm, Israeli autumnal night. It gives me great pleasure to know that our nation is still carrying on the legacy of the first of the *Avot* and *Imahot*.

Shabbat Shalom!
Jacob Rosenbaum