



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Michael San Soucie



Sunday was a full day *tiyul* throughout the areas outside of Jerusalem. We visited battle sites, locations mentioned in the Bible, crusader fortresses and the vineyards for an Israeli winery. We get a lot done when we travel. More enjoyable than all that, however, were the Bar Kochba caves. Bar Kochba led a successful rebellion against the Roman occupation in the second century C.E. His success is attributed to his guerilla tactics. His followers dug hundreds of caves throughout Israel, caves that one has to crawl on one's hands and knees and sometimes stomach to get through. The rebels designed such narrow, complex caves so that the Roman legionnaires would be forced to take off their armor and move slowly through a complicated system of tunnels to get to the rebel armies. Rebel soldiers were then easily able to ambush them. We crawled through two such caves on Sunday. It was an unintentional exercise in teamwork—every student signaled to the student behind him how to move (feet forward or face forward; on your back or on your belly) and at the caves' narrowest points, every student was cheering on the ones behind him to get through. I personally have no idea how I squeezed through a hole legitimately as narrow as my shoulders. But I did, and so did everyone else who came into the caves. Everyone came out with huge smiles on their faces, especially knowing that a feast waited for us back at the dorms for dinner. We do *tiyulim* right at Orayta!

The yeshiva provided us with a unique learning opportunity this past Monday: we went to Aish Hatorah, an international outreach organization based in the Old City of Jerusalem, for a daylong seminar about the divine authorship of the Torah. From 9:30 in the morning till almost 7 at night, we sat in classes that truly flipped some students' paradigms about the Torah. With no more than a cumulative hour off throughout the entire program, it was an intense day, to say the least. But it was definitely necessary, considering that divine authorship of the Torah is one of the biggest questions hanging over most students' heads. Inspirational Rabbis presenting engaging content made for a great day. I think a lot of students had their questions answered as best as can ever be. The idea to do such a seminar is a testament to the uniqueness of Orayta. I can't think of another yeshiva that would so willingly expose its students to outside perspectives, but that's exactly what our *Roshei Yeshivot* set out to do. That's how I know I chose the right place to spend this year in Israel. I'm an open-minded person. I know I'm in good company.

Michael graduated from Yavneh Academy of Dallas, Texas. He was Student Council President, Senior Captain of the basketball team and section editor of the Bulldog Print. Michael loves the openness of the Orayta Rebbeim. Michael plans on attending University of Pennsylvania next year.