



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Pesach Baral



This first week of Chanukah has been a tremendous time for spiritual growth. It is the time of miracles, when the completely unexpected can be made to happen. This amazing week is also a time when one can learn a great deal about oneself, friends, and the entire Jewish people as a whole. Though many great things have happened this week, one line said by my friend has had a particularly large effect on me.

As the entire *Yeshivat Orayta* were lighting their menorahs on the second night, we noticed a group of tourists, who seemed obviously Jewish, gathering outside our windows. As we started singing *Maot Tzur*, the group got larger and larger and a few of the tourists even started taking pictures. In the midst of all of this, my roommate, Eitan Cooper, who happened to be sitting next to me, said a very striking line.

"Look" he said, "It's Jews in their natural habitat!"

At the time I wasn't really sure if he was referring to us, the Jews gathering inside celebrating Chanukah, or them, the tourists looking inside the window, staring at us celebrating the two and a half thousand year old tradition of lighting candles every night for eight days. In today's world, where is the Jew in his or her natural habitat; is it going through with the traditions, or is it just watching and hearing about them. This is the sad question I have been struggling with and what I have been searching for a solution for.

The first thing that would come to mind in this situation would be the story of Chanukah. It is a story of triumph, the weak against the strong, and the few against the many. It is also a story of strength and perseverance. We, the Jews, were willing to stand up against the influences of the Hellenistic Greeks and drive them out of our temple and our homeland. What is less well known, however, is that the story of Chanukah is also a story of internal turmoil. There were Jews of that time period that wanted to become more Greek, that wanted to assimilate into the culture of the ruling empire. Maccabees had to address all of these issues in their struggles.

This story of Chanukah is very similar to what we, the Jewish people, are dealing with today. In this day and age there are almost a hundred times more Jews standing outside the window than inside, assimilated and with almost no knowledge of what is going on inside. Today, we have to work to show what there is to be had inside, to be "*Persumei Nisa*", or to publicize the miracle. This is not to say that one has to go running around Ben Yehuda Street singing Chanukah songs or passing out fliers about the Rebbe. Just wishing a fellow Jew a "*Chanukah Sameach*" or happy Chanukah. When you light your menorah, light it with the knowledge that even

though you are “inside”, there are still those “outside” who have what to gain from just watching you light or from a “Happy Chanukah” from all of us.

Pesach attended the Ida Crown Jewish Academy in Chicago. He played for the High School Wrestling Team and was the Computer Editor of the Senior Yearbook. Pesach was also in the Mashpiim Club, the School Student Volunteer Organisation.

His favourite part of Orayta are the Gemara Shurim given by Rav Noam Himmelstein. "I love the way it's taught and Rav Noam's friendly personality. And the overall openness at Orayta where the Rabbanim are willing to answer any question and discuss any topic."

After Orayta, Pesach is planning on attending The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.