



STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Richard Bourque

In coming to Orayta, I was looking to find meaning in my Judaism. For the majority of my past, I've lived a life based on the ideals of moving Mankind forward through the development of intelligence, not blind faith. Rabbi David Aaron's philosophy class (among many fantastic lectures and *chavrutas*) felt most natural to me.



At first, the *shiurim* were slightly unnerving. We discussed topics that involved the meaning of our lives, our preconceived notions of reality, and the all-encompassing "God". Many *shiurim* contained thoughts I found to be nice ideas; we are all one, nothing is REALLY evil etc. Things continued pretty much the same way, until one day Rabbi Aaron said something that not only switched on a light bulb in my brain; it ignited an inferno in my head.

"You can doubt everything you know, except for the fact THAT you know" he said. Suddenly a paradox fired into my brain.

"Rabbi Aaron," I asked, "if I can deny everything I know, except for the fact THAT I know, that means that there is something more... that means I know two things?" To which he replied with a comment pertaining to Purim, and told me to be patient. Well, that didn't happen.

Within a few days we held a Q&A. I used this opportunity to present my answers to Rabbi Aaron, who again told me to be patient and stop thinking about it. So I did... for about 20 minutes.

Being in the *Chumash shiur*, I found more examples of this paradox I had discovered. At the end of November Rabbi Aaron returned after being away, and I was itching to attend his lectures again. He brought up an idea that we are all *PARTS* of, or aspects of, an all-encompassing whole, that is a combination of all of us and infinitely more. A God that exists in the finite, physical world *and* outside of space and time, being everywhere at every moment in all times, and infinitely more! A paradox? I think so.

He told us that Judaism isn't the monotheism we grew up with. God isn't that man in the sky with a big white beard, being limitlessly more powerful than us, and we must worship him for his own egotistical needs. Nor is the belief in pantheism truth. It is in fact a combination of both. Everything is God, but God is so much more (for example: a rectangle is a square, but a square isn't a rectangle.) We are a part of God, our true selves, that is. Not these characters we play. I'm not Richard Cohen Bourque, I'm an aspect of God that has a purpose in this world. That purpose being, to bring Godliness into the physical world through means that only I, and I alone can achieve.

This has given my learning incredible meaning. It's given me the opportunity to reevaluate many of my actions and focus on something so much bigger than I. I now feel that I understand why it's ok to not fully understand everything. Just to let go of what I thought I wanted my life to be, and just know that, if I do my best, the reason for my existence will become clearer and clearer to me...

Shabbat Shalom!