



## A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Rafi Lowenstein

Rabbi Aaron once said that two people could simultaneously be physically sitting in the same room, but mentally in different worlds. This *Yom Hashoah* I saw two opposite spectrums of spiritual strength; not between two different individuals, but through an inner struggle within myself.



*Yom Hashoah* had just begun. Many Orayta students and I went to the *Kotel* for a supposed memorial service, but it never took place. Yet I still felt an urge to fill my night with something meaningful to commemorate *Yom Hashoah*. I didn't know what to do. Suddenly I got a call from my very good family friends telling me that they are in Israel, and would like to see me. So I headed over to their apartment. The night was far from a meaningful memorial to six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust.

We stuffed ourselves with pizza. Watched the X-games. Talked about each other's lives. It was really fun and relaxing. At least I thought so.

When I returned to Orayta I saw my friends watching "Shindler's List"; a film that is very well done, and extremely meaningful. I realized that every action and decision has a proper time and place. For my friends *Yom Hashoah* exists. It is not just a date on a calendar; it is a way to live for one day.

The next morning Orayta arranged for a survivor to speak to us. His story and remarks were solemn but inspirational. His story was unique, but his message was even more riveting. Only through unity and pride in our nation and religion can we achieve our greatest heights; assimilation is our destruction.

Next, guided by Rav Binny, Orayta visited *Yad Vashem*. We were there for six hours; I don't find that a coincidence. We visited the entire campus including the central museum. I was not in tears, nor was I purposefully in a grave mood. I was just doing what I felt was proper at the time: to remember.

I had a purposeful *Yom Hashoah*. I realized, however, the difference between my previous night, and my day. My night was out of place. Although it is important to relax, have fun, and socialize with friends - there is still a time and place to do so. My day with a survivor and my visit to *Yad Vashem*, however, encompassed *simcha* and joy. Rav Binny always says that true *simcha* and joy is rooted within a sense of purpose. Even though I would not describe it as a fun and exciting day, I achieved a sense of purpose. I felt I was doing what I want to do, which generated a feeling of *simcha* and joy. I did not feel as if only I was commemorating *Yom Hashoah*, but as if every person at *Yad Vashem* that passed by me that day was remembering with me.

My *Yom Hashoah* was really special. Not only because Jewish holidays and specified dates are more apparent and magnified in Israel, but because I learned the reason for remembrance and commemoration. It is to affect our souls.