



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Zevvy Goldish



The past week here at Orayta has been quite an experience. Not to say that we haven't been learning - *pum fakhert* (quite the opposite)! But all the *tiyulim* and activities we had have bolstered our pre-Purim learning to a new extreme. Where to begin?

The *Rambam* in his *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* suggests how one can come to know God: By looking at nature and all that God has created; when you see just how awesome the universe is, it will instill within you a deep desire to know God. On our *tiyul* to the *Negev*, we saw a "*Machtesh*"- a huge canyon that was formed over millions of years by prehistoric forces. Being in the presence of this massive display; getting to swim in its collected rainwater; followed by hikes, camel rides, and a campfire under a sky of stars is enough to make you think - about God; and about how amazing the universe is.

A common theme at Orayta is the idea of realizing that you are a part of a greater whole. That you are integral to the universe, and that your actions **can** make a difference, despite the fact that you might feel like an infinitesimal speck when viewed cosmically. You **are someone** - a "some" of the "One" as Rabbi Aaron points out - and on "Purim madness day" we really had a chance to experience this. The eating relay competition was a good example of teamwork - it helps to know that you're not alone. On a more fundamental note -everyone is trying to accomplish so much this year, but you really accomplish the most when you realize that everyone's accomplishments are as valuable as your own.

There is a football game scheduled this week for the Orayta guys versus the Fellows. Now while this may seem like *Bitul Torah* at first glance, it's really representative of the relationship we have with our Fellows. The *Gemara* says that for every case *Rabbi Yochanan* brought, *Reish Lakish*, his *chavruta*, brought twenty four counter arguments. At Orayta, we sharpen our skills by really learning what it means to battle with our *chavrutas*, both on and off the field. The experiences gained from a barbeque can contribute to your

personal growth just as much as from learning all day, as long as the ultimate goal is *Avodas Hashem*.

Some people think Judaism is about making the material spiritual. But we learn the opposite - it's making the spiritual material. If the goal was purely intellectual, there would be no need for a physical world. It's easy to starve yourself, to be ascetic and reclusive, and call yourself spiritual. The real challenge is being spiritual *whilst* immersed in the physical. The goal of Judaism is to take the spiritual concepts of love, purpose and Godliness, and make them actual - not just ideas, but manifest in actual giving, actual efforts.

With *Purim* just around the corner, I hope we can all take these ideas and apply them to our lives. Some people are nervous about sharing their values and expressing themselves; *Purim* gives them an opportunity to remove the mask; be themselves; and actualize their spiritual values. Let's take this week before *Purim* to realize just who we are on the inside, and to appreciate the wonderful universe that God has created for us - by spreading our love to each and every person; for we are all part of the same reality, and we are all created in the Image of God.

Zevvy graduated from Maimonides School in Boston, where he played keyboard in a jazz band. He is planning to attend Brandeis University.

His favorite part of Orayta is learning in the Beis after night seder.