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Best of Bereshit, Noach, Lech Lecha, Vayera, Chaye Sarah 5768

A Parent's Thoughts on Yom Tov at YNA

**by By William Senders, father to Shana Bet Student
Noah Senders**

We came to Israel for Yom Kippur specifically because we had such a good experience last year. Not only is the davening very special - I have four girls and for me it's a special bonding opportunity with my son - but also because it's his second year in the Yeshiva, and I was expecting a similar experience to last year. The nice surprise was that a year ago we were davening together, and a good part of my job was to elbow him when he would fall asleep. This year not only was there no sleeping, but he was really into the davening, and prepared for it. He also went out of his way to make sure I was comfortable. Since his enrollment in Yeshiva, I have observed his sensitivity to kibud av v'eim. It's a huge thing, not a little thing. I don't know how the Yeshiva transmits and teaches that, but seeing it ALL come together for Yom Kippur, made it that much more special.

The davening on Yom Kippur is just a moving experience. To be with so many kids that are really focused on davening, and the teachers and the Rabbis who are all good examples, particularly Rav Katz. It's a long day and here you have Rav Katz - who is not a young man - jumping at the end of the day, and you can't help but be moved and inspired. I always thought that coming to Israel for Sukkot, when the kids have only been here for a short time, was too early, that you have to wait until they're here half the year. But it is a very special experience, and I would recommend it to other families who can do it.

I also joined the Yeshiva's vatikin davening on Hoshana Rabbah morning on the roof. It's an outstanding experience being right opposite the Kotel so early in the morning. The fact that my wife wanted to come back to

Israel this year is only because last year she was so impressed with the davening. My whole family truly enjoyed it. It's incredibly special and sets the tone for the whole experience, making it much more than just a vacation.

Spotlight: Back to Learning

The new zman began in earnest this week, and with it came the start of many more opportunities to learn and grow. Besides the multiple shiurim and chavrutot from Elul, both afternoon Ulpan and nightly Chaburot night were added this week.

The Ulpan classes (beginners and advanced) are given by one of the most experienced and innovative Hebrew-language teachers in Jerusalem, Rabbi Shlomo Eitan. The Chaburot are interactive study groups offering a wide array of subjects to choose from, ranging from halacha and hashkafa, to understanding mitzvot. The uniqueness of each group, as well as the open atmosphere and lively discussions, help make the evenings much more than just "seder time".

To top it all off, our famous weekly "chugim" also began this week. Groups of students gather at rebbeim's homes to eat, talk Torah, and of course, to sing. As Harav Bina stresses, it's the ruach that is really important.

Alumni Spotlight: by Yossi Davis, Yeshiva University (5767)

Taken by Surprise: The Netiv Aryeh Family at YU after an amazing year at Yeshiva last year, I was worried that my new home at Yeshiva University would be a bit overwhelming. I knew I would have to find time for learning and make sure to go to shiur and minyan every day, yet I would also have to go to class, study hard and do well on my exams. While I knew that balancing my time between yeshiva and university was a daunting task, I could always count on all my friends and rabbeim who were... still at Netiv Aryeh.

My support network from Israel wouldn't be at YU with me. That was intimidating.

Although nervous when I first got to YU, I was surprised to find such a strong support network from the Netiv Aryeh-YU community. From the very first day, Darren Levin, Netiv Aryeh's YU representative, greeted me at the orientation breakfast. A few days later there was an exciting chug with Rav Tzvi Bina and Dr. John Krug, and shortly after that I was invited to the house of a Netiv Aryeh alum for an "alumni dinner" with four or five others. I couldn't help but begin to feel much more comfortable at YU.

Darren, who returned to learn at both Netiv Aryeh and the Mir after graduating YU in 2005, is now back at YU. Although he is currently pursuing smicha as well as a master's degree in social work and Jewish education, he is there for every student. He runs all of the chugim, and organizes all of the Netiv Aryeh events at YU, such as the alumni dinners, Shabbat meals, and guest speakers. He also organizes speeches and sets up appointments for the students to speak with one of the most important members of Netiv Aryeh's support network.

That person is Rabbi Dr. John Krug. Dr. Krug has been an important part of the Netiv Aryeh family for years. With a doctorate in clinical psychology, a master's degree in both psychology and secondary Jewish education, and smicha, Dr. Krug is able to

speak to students about anything. He not only gives lectures about topics like relationships, anxiety and time management, he makes himself available to any student who wants to talk. It is comforting to know that I have the opportunity to get advice or even just to talk to a professional of Dr. Krug's caliber.

If that isn't enough, the sheer number of Netiv Aryeh alumni at YU is itself reassuring. Not only do I have at least one Netiv Aryeh student in virtually every one of my classes, I can't even walk to class without bumping into alumni of all ages. It is so nice to see the students who were shana bet last year - guys I looked up to - doing the exact same things that I'm doing.

There are also many married alumni who live on the YU campus. These families always have students over for home-cooked meals, not just on Shabbat, but also during the week. They are great role models, and give us advice on the classes and professors to take, how to study for a certain test (in my case biology), and what type of shiur to go too.

Getting advice, feeling at home, and knowing that there are so many people there for you - these are the goals of having the extended Netiv Aryeh family at YU. When I went to the chug last Wednesday night, I realized just how many people I have at YU who are there for me. I feel comfortable here now. It was a tough adjustment, but a big part of what made it possible was that I had a whole group of people here supporting me.

Spotlight on Yeshiva

The Sound of Torah

As the Yeshiva moves into the long winter session, the beautiful sound of learning emanates throughout the Yeshiva building. In the morning, every corner of the Beit Midrash, the porch overlooking the Kotel and even in the hallways, students can be seen preparing with their Rebbeim for the Shiur. The diligence and effort placed into pounding the sefarim at night is simply a pleasure to watch. But it is during the afternoon, which resonates with multiple classes on every subject, that a unique blend of voices is heard.

One of the highlights is the opportunity to learn with an Israeli chavruta. It not only gives the students the ability to really improve their Hebrew, a great supplement to our Ulpan, but it also promotes an understanding and friendship between our Israeli and American brothers.

Working Out

The Yeshiva has an agreement with the Jerusalem YMCA for the use of their gym and swimming pool during the afternoon break. A short walk from the old city, the facilities are spacious and modern. During the 1:00-4:00PM break many of the students pump iron, catch a swim, play basketball (indoors), and even use the sauna.

Sports Update

The Flag-Football season is underway, and we are fielding a record five teams in the AFI (American Football in Israel) league. If you happen to be in Jerusalem on a Friday morning, hop over to Kraft Field and the odds are you will probably get to watch one of our teams in action.

Use this area to provide your subscribers information about your organization.

Sincerely,

HaRav Aharon Bina, Netiv Aryeh
Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh

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