

## Trying Out *Frum*

*continued from page 49*

week I adapted to a new pattern. One day I got the blessings completely right, and I felt like a champion. And by day five I'd cut two minutes off of the time it took to recite the *birkat hamazon*.

One of the surprising side effects of being aware all the time was never feeling like I overate. It's so easy to sit in the college dining hall for an hour talking to your friends and constantly refilling your plate. But during *frum* week I had to say something to mark when my meal started and when it ended. And in that blessing, I was thanking God for satiating me—not for giving me too much, not for a mountainous abundance of chocolate chip cookies, but for being satisfied. I had assumed that thinking about food constantly would make me want to consume it all the time, but because eating was framed by something meaningful, it had the opposite effect.

The new rules I chose to observe also increased other people's awareness of me. I'd like to think that before *frum*

week I wasn't parading around campus in overly revealing clothing, but still, wearing long skirts, cardigans, and crew neck tops represented a recognizable change in my wardrobe. Inquiries from friends about my new "uniform" often elicited explanations about my project. As for strangers who passed me in the street, no one treated me any differently, but I felt different, knowing that they recognized that I was, if not certainly Jewish, then at least a member of a community that required modesty of women. It was disconcerting for me to so publicly manifest a normally internal part of my identity. My male friends who wear *kippot* validated this feeling of hyperconsciousness. Some said wearing a *kippah* made them reluctant to act inappropriately, for fear of feeding negative stereotypes; others commented that it gave them the incentive to do something nice for others. Throughout the week I remained ambivalent on the clothing issue. On the one hand, being so easily singled out by appearance made me feel unique and important. On the other, I felt that

displaying my Judaism so prominently caused others to see my identity along only one dimension.

Prayer was by far the most challenging part of my week. It wasn't carving out the time from a Yale academic schedule that was so difficult; in fact, having those necessary breaks and seeing the same people at the same hours every day because of a prescribed rhythm was incredibly calming. What was hard was figuring out how to have some sort of meeting with God on a fixed schedule instead of coming to it on my own. I was going to have to pray *shacharit* each morning at the 7:30 service whether I was ready or not, so how was I going to make the experience spiritually meaningful? Also, the mode of prayer made me feel disconnected. There was just too much I didn't know—I was using an unfamiliar *siddur*, and even though I'm fairly fluent in reading Hebrew, I could barely keep up with the pace set by my peers, who had a lifetime's experience of saying the same words day in and day out. I was constantly trying to fig-

of North America's only ski-in ski-out *shul* (on the slopes of Deer Valley Resort during the winter months), says he's committed to "assisting in any way possible to make the Westminster Hillel one of the finest small-college Hillels in the country"; Rabbi Ilana Schwartzman of the URJ's Congregation Kol Ami in Salt Lake City has been actively supporting the new Hillel group as well.

Hillel's kick-off activity was last year's Chanukah party with a live band. During Admitted Students Week, a Hillel table welcomed Jewish students with original design T-shirts and *hamantaschen*. And on Pesach, Hillel students partnered with Jewish Family Service in creating and delivering Passover food baskets for needy area families. They also enjoyed a Hillel seder with students from other colleges who responded to posters displayed on their campuses.

—Claire D. Friedlander, college consultant to Jewish Family Service in Stamford and Westport, CT; college advisor, Jewish High School of Connecticut; former vice president, Temple Sinai, Stamford

## WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY HILLEL

*Washington and Lee is one of Hillel International's  
Small and Mighty Campuses of Excellence.  
The University offers our Jewish students:*

A new \$4-million Hillel House  
featuring a kosher café

Student-led Shabbat services  
and dinner

The "Very Interesting Professors"  
lunch series

Community service projects  
locally and internationally

Holiday parties, including Purim  
for local children and sukkah building

Community Passover Seder

High Holiday services and  
Break-the-Fast on campus

Participation in Birthright Israel

Judaic Studies courses in the  
Department of Religious Studies

*Washington and Lee's distinctive curriculum blends traditional liberal arts and sciences with pre-professional programs in business, journalism and law, giving students a contemporary perspective necessary to flourish in a complex world.*

For additional information, contact the Hillel Director, Washington and Lee University,  
204 W. Washington Street, Lexington, VA 24450; call (540) 458-8443.  
Also visit our website, [hillel.wlu.edu](http://hillel.wlu.edu)