

orientation to ancient and modern Jerusalem and continues as students begin to confront issues and aspects of Israeli society through a weekly course of lectures and field study. Despite their demanding academic schedules, students still find ways to interact in Israeli society, often through their required community service projects.



**Rabbinical student Micah Lapidus with his Ethiopian family.**

Micah Lapidus volunteers with Ethiopian Jewish immigrants in the Mevasseret Zion Absorption Center. "Every week, I look forward to my volunteer work. Dozens of beautiful children run out to the bus to greet the HUC-JIR volunteers with hugs and shouts when we arrive. During my visits, I forget all the challenges of life in Israel and focus on the simple human connections that our tradition values so highly," he explains.

Other examples of community service include students working as volunteers in battered women's shelters or at centers for promoting dialogue and conflict resolution, or as tutors for underprivileged children at the Reform Kol HaNeshama Congregation.

Acting Dean Rabbi Naamah Kelman encourages faculty to not only teach their academic courses, but to share with the students their personal experiences as Jerusalemites, as Israelis, and as Jews living in the State of Israel. This informal connection often gives students the most powerful educational experience.

Students are also encouraged to develop contacts with their colleagues in the Israeli Rabbinical Program. Rabbi Michael Marmor began his HUC-JIR studies as a

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## The Day After the February 22nd Bombing

Excerpts of a *D'var Torah* on *Parshat Terumah*

by Laura Baum, *Year-In-Israel* rabbinical student

I spent the day wondering what I was going to do with my *D'var Torah*: how could I just give it as planned, in light of the terrible tragedy our community had witnessed almost exactly 24 hours before? I decided to reexamine our *parsha*, *Terumah*, and to think about how I now connected to the text differently than I had earlier. After all, we read the same Torah every year, but it is what we bring to that experience, based on our own lives, that informs how we understand it. I discovered that *Parshat Terumah*, which on first glance may just seem like a series of instructions about how to build the *Mishkan*, the Tabernacle, may have a lot to say to us this morning.

At a time when we have come together so powerfully as a community to support each other, I began to see the building of the Tabernacle very much as a communal activi-

ty. Although God gave Moshe the instructions, God said "they shall bring Me an offering... they shall make me a sanctuary...and so they shall do." Indeed, community has become a watchword of our faith. In the book of Genesis we read "It is not good for any person to be alone." Later, Rabbi Tarfon tells us in *Pirke Avot* "Do not separate yourself from the community" and Sholom Aleichem observed "Life is with people." Just as the Israelites were a people working together to physically build the *Mishkan*, we are working as a community as we begin to process what is going on around us, and to make sense of it as future leaders.

The journey to Jewish religious leadership is more than an individual spiritual quest, we are part of a people. By being here, we *show* our communities on other continents that we have a visceral personal connection to the State of Israel – we demonstrate this by being here. Though I am sure that we could

somewhat successfully stand in classrooms in North America and Australia and try to convince people that Israel could have meaning in their lives, we serve as real models by simply choosing to be here. Sometimes telling is not enough; we have to act in ways which penetrate the hearts of others. Through our choices and actions, and how we communicate them, we demonstrate what is important to us. Having been created *b'tzelem Elohim*, we have a responsibility to look into each other's faces and to see God – to experience God's presence dwelling among us – and to remember that we have a common experience, and that we are here for each other.



Judaism is a religion that has long valued deed over creed. Each of us may have different reasons and beliefs about why we are here, but we share something in common: we all picked up

our lives and moved to Israel, and we should not discount the importance of that action. Elazar ben Azariah questioned in the first century, "He whose wisdom surpasses his good deeds, to what is he compared? [He is like] a tree whose branches are abundant, but whose roots are few, and the wind comes and uproots it and overturns it." This year we are growing many branches – our knowledge and wisdom are constantly expanding. But I also hope that we are growing roots through our act of being here – that what we do here somehow grounds us.

As a community, we hopefully find a sense of *shalom* – of peace and of wholeness, together. In difficult times, it may not come easily, and it does not happen overnight. It is a work in progress. Just as the instructions for the building of the Tabernacle were given in fractions, this is something that we can strive for, bit by bit.