

Beginning college is full of new and promising experiences. However, going to college involves leaving the shelter of your old experiences to embrace the new. According to one of my professors, in a new place, humans create a “home base.” this means that each individual searches for anything that produces a feeling and sense of home. So suddenly, new students are playing tons of icebreaker games and attempting to find new friends, and new familiarities. However, in addition to these forced attempts at acquainting themselves to their new life, there are built in, necessary actions that will yield the same effect. For example, doing laundry! It seems that many of us today, do not know how to do laundry. So, pooling our knowledge together, we can figure out...that we must separate the colors, put the detergent in before the clothes, and to make sure to empty all pockets of papers and pens before washing them! We do other things as we form a new community. We share directions of what little we know of the campus with others and receive other’s knowledge in order to get to class that first day. We eat with complete strangers, tasting something besides mother’s home cooked food. With all these built in ways to meet other people in a new setting, I also had one more factor that would complete my home base. I had a special community that was available to me, before I ever signed the contract to attend the University of Miami.

When I was first searching for colleges, I had a whole list of factors for what I wanted and didn’t want in my school. However, Jewish life was not one of those factors. It wasn’t until later that I realized how much it should have been. So the first week of school I was trying, like everyone else to adapt to my new life. I did all those crazy icebreakers, learned the basics to laundry, spoke to complete strangers in the dining hall, adjusted my stomach to this new food, and I felt I was adjusting well. However, I knew I

was missing something. When Shabbat came that first weekend I realized how necessary Jewish life was to my concept of home. Friday night dinner was a central part of my life at home. And Shabbat became a central part of my life at the University of Miami. The emotions I experienced lighting the candles with other women and saying the prayers for Shabbat at the Hillel on campus united me to these new friends. We had all experienced, to greater or lesser extent, some influence of Judaism in our lives that was brought together when we went through the rituals of the Sabbath. Despite differences in upbringing, there was a connection between every single person in the room. At least that's how I felt on that first night. My perception was truly tested. Sectors of Orthodox, Reform, and Chabad formed and pitted themselves against each other. (I leave out conservative, because it doesn't exist at the University.) My friends would complain that there wasn't kosher food for the Shabbat meal, another would complain how nobody takes him seriously as a Jew and discredits their knowledge and actions, and another would walk out when his beliefs were laughed at. These were the times that tried the Jewish unity that I believe in. However, apologies were made, and we all learned more about the sensitivity we must feel towards others. Even with all the different beliefs held among the Jewish community, I have learned that we still depend on each other.

Shabbat provides a break from the rest of the week. After a hard week of all-niters preparing for a presentation in architecture, Shabbat is the most wonderful experience in the world. Yes, the times spent in my studio are fun, and I truly love what I'm doing, but it is nice to be able to unwind and force myself to rest. Spending time at the Hillel house is absolutely necessary. Even if I don't spend the whole Shabbat, the

opportunity to continue my Jewish life learned from my highschool and this synagogue is greatly appreciated.

So after finding new friends, learning the basics to laundry, finding my place in the Jewish community, experiencing crazy study hours and enjoying Jewish life, I can truly say I have learned what college is all about... new experiences.