

“Heaven” at the Southeastern Regional Youth Kallah

Mark Wilco, a youth group board member at Ramat Shalom Congregation in Plantation, Florida, writes:

THEY ALMOST LOOKED like fireflies. If you squinted and imagined just a little, the spiraling embers soaring high into the February night sky seemed to dance and swirl with the ocean breeze that swept through the trees. I’m telling you — it was heaven.

On the weekend of February 11-13, we, the Reconstructionist Teens of North America, in order to form a more perfect community, establish friendship

and promote intellect, gathered at our lovely synagogue, Ramat Shalom, for our highly anticipated Southeast Regional *Kallah*. As we began to slowly trickle in on Friday night, screams of excitement filled the lobby. Thirteen teens had traveled from afar to join twenty-three Ramat Shalom kids. As I looked around the room, I couldn’t help but feel ecstatic, knowing the events that were to take place.

*Dragon Boating
at the
Youth Kallah.
Photo by
David Nathan.*



Our Judaica High School members had worked collectively to create the theme for the *kallah*, “Changing of the Tides.” As we all know, water is a recurring symbol in the Torah. From the rampant flood during Noah’s time, to the waters that brought us Moses, water always seems to deliver a change in our beliefs and traditions. Throughout

the weekend, we discussed the traditions of our ancestors, the traditions of today, and those of the days to come. During the teen-led *Kabbalat Shabbat* service, we read about the history of the prayers that we say every week. On *Shabbat*, morning we studied Exodus 25, the building of the Tabernacle, with Rabbi Andrew (Jacobs) and Cantor Sharon (Hordes). We expressed our views of Judaism through illustrations on cloth, which we then erected as a Tabernacle on the beach, beneath a silvery moon that grinned at us from its loft in heaven.

The people who came to the *Kallah* never ceased to amaze me. Between Israeli dancing, Dragon Boat races, *havdalah* at the edge of the ocean and a bright orange bonfire that illuminated our eyes and reflected the warmth in our hearts, there was nothing but laughter, love, and lifetime bonds formed. Three days flew by like a dream, and it was time to say goodbye. All thirty-nine of us huddled, teary-eyed, in a circle, as we sang songs of love, friendship, and the sweet sorrow of parting. Hugs and e-mail addresses were traded, promises were made, and then we went our separate ways.

I will always hold in my heart the memory of those fireflies of flame dancing through the star-speckled night sky and remember this glorious weekend when we were all here, together. I can’t possibly wait for the next one. 