On the Front Lines

During “Operation Cast Lead,” Yeshivat Har Etzion talmidim and alumni were involved in all aspects of the war from actual fighting to guarding the periphery to treating the wounded.

Case in point: Alumnus Dr. Michael Bayme ’85 PC, a surgeon at Soroka Medical Center in Be’er Sheva, made aliya in 1999 with his wife and children. Bayme was drafted into the IDF in 2002 and for his reserve duty initially served as an instructor in life support for advanced trauma victims. Seeking a more active role, in 2005 he requested a transfer to a field unit and served in the army’s mobile ICU in Gaza and on the borders of Egypt and Jericho.

Dr. Michael Bayme with ICU unit, third from right

At 1:30 am on Motzaei Shabbat, the 8th day of Chanuka, Bayme was told to report to his base by 8 am. He spent the next three-and-a-half weeks as part of a mobile medical unit on the border of Gaza.

Bayme lauds the national unity of purpose during Operation Cast Lead and was impressed by the 100% mobilization and the efficient functioning of his unit. “I didn’t feel afraid because I was part of a unified group with a clear function,” he says. “And there was a lot of spiritual unity.” His tefillin were used by at least 15 other soldiers and the joint religious-secular Shabbat meals and prayer services were memorable, especially a Carlebach-style Kabbalat Shabbat with a Yemenite flavor.

After the war, he was gratified to be present during the discharge of two of the soldiers he had treated on the border and accompanied by ambulance to Soroka.

Bayme says his desire to actively serve his country was inspired by Harav Amital who, during Bayme’s year in Yeshiva, often shared with students his own experiences during the founding of the State and Israel’s early wars.

Binyamin Greenberg, Hesder ’04 and second generation Har Etzion talmid, was one of those called on to fight:

Binyamin Greenberg, top row left, with other Har Etzion soldiers

“Operation Cast Lead started right after we finished basic training, and my unit was sent to guard an outpost on the Gazan border. There are about 30 guys in the unit, 11 of them Gushnikim. 24 hours a day you could hear the artillery fire and drones. The first mortar shell that hit us landed right outside our base. The second one landed inside. I was on guard duty then. When a mortar shell is fired at you, you don’t see it coming. I was hit in the leg by shrapnel and taken to Soroka Medical..."
Center in Be’er Sheva to have it removed. Others weren’t as lucky. Thank G-d I’ve healed and am now back on duty. While I was on duty, and then in the hospital, I was privileged to see how much Am Yisrael cares for its soldiers. People didn’t stop coming, bringing food and gifts and doing whatever they could to express their caring and appreciation.”

Jacob Schiff, a Shana Aleph talmid from Toronto, organized a visit of the overseas and first year hesder students to Netivot. “We wanted to help out in a hands-on way and personally contribute to the war effort,” Schiff explains. He describes the town: “Every twenty or so feet there was a gigantic concrete cylinder set up to offer protection in the event of a Red Alert, and a large plume of smoke was visible on the horizon from Gaza, just ten kilometers away.” The students painted several cylinders and spent time with local children. “We felt that we were helping to restore some normalcy to the city by camouflaging the harsh, grey cylinders. And it was especially meaningful for us to help entertain the kids in the bomb shelters,” Schiff said.

Moshe Alamo is a participant in Herzog College’s Leadership Training Program for the Ethiopian community. Alamo and his wife Sarah are also part of a Garin Torani living in Netivot with the goal of teaching and working with the large Ethiopian community there. The Garin was founded by Herzog College students who are dedicated to strengthening the community spiritually, physically and emotionally. On Shabbat Chanukah, Moshe Alamo was at a shiur in shul and his wife and her sisters were in their second-story apartment saying Tehillim when the siren went off. A missile hit their building and one of their neighbors was killed from the blast, but they were miraculously unharmed. While their home was being repaired, the Alamos were forced to spend several months adrift, living with their parents in Ofakim and Netanya. The couple finally returned home in early March, determined to continue with their important work in the community. “We know that what we are doing is vitally important for the future of the Ethiopian children of Netivot and if we don’t do it, who will? We will not allow the missiles to deter us,” Alamo says.

According to Rosh Hayeshiva Harav Mosheh Lichtenstein, “The need to protect innocent Jewish lives from murderous terrorist attacks, and to defend the state from those who seek to uproot us from our land and destroy our country, proves once more the vital need of serving in the IDF and participating in the defense of the country. This is a religious, moral and historical imperative that must be integrated into the framework of our Torah study.”

The Lichtensteins in NY

The annual Alumni Shabbaton took place this year on Parshat Beshalach, February 6-7, at the Young Israel of Scarsdale, NY, with the participation of Rosh Hayeshiva Rav Aharon Lichtenstein and Rav Doniel Schreiber ’86, Ram and hosted by Steven and Adina Fredman. The weekend included joint meals and davening for YHE alumni, as well as an Oneg Shabbat and tish. Rav Lichtenstein spoke about Israel’s conversion controversy and issues faced by religious soldiers in the IDF. He also gave an in-depth Gemara shiur and a talk on Parshat HaShavua.

Several other events in the New York area were planned to coincide with the visit of Rav Aharon and Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein:

- Gush alumni in the rabbinate and chinuch met with Rav Lichtenstein to discuss current issues in their respective fields. The event, spearheaded by Rabbi Seth Grauer ’96 and held at the Fifth Avenue Synagogue, was a unique opportunity for alumni to come together, consult with the Rosh Yeshiva and benefit from his perspective on challenges faced by Modern Orthodoxy in America today. The discussion lasted for two and a half hours and, at its conclusion, all those in attendance had enjoyed it so much that they immediately began discussions on when and where another similar event could be held.
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program. This is a new initiative, geared at alumni and their children approaching the age of bar or bat mitzvah. Breakfast at the Fifth Avenue Synagogue was followed by a shiur by Rav Doniel Schreiber on “Your New Role in the Mitzvah of Kiddush” and a meeting with Rav Aharon Lichtenstein. Yitzchak Weber, who attended together with his father, Eli ’80, said, “It was exciting to meet with Rav Lichtenstein and to talk in learning.”

A special pre-dinner pacesetter evening took place at The Jewish Museum in Manhattan. The evening began with a tour of the Marc Chagall exhibit and a dessert reception. Rav Aharon and Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein made a presentation on “Contemporary Parenting: Challenges and Response.” This was followed by a panel discussion and Q&A moderated by Rabbi Tully Harcsztark, founding principal of SAR High School and proud parent of Talia Harcsztark, currently studying at Migdal Oz. The Lichtensteins’ remarks about maintaining focus on Torah values and priorities were an inspiration to all.

Rav Tabory at Midreschet Wollishofen in Zurich

In March, Rav Binyamin Tabory made his second visit to Midreschet Wollishofen, a learning center/beit midrash founded three years ago with the goal of strengthening Modern Orthodox education in Zurich. The initiators, including Har Etzion alumni, organize between six and eight educational weekends a year. Lecturers are generally flown in from Israel for these weekends to speak in local yeshivas and universities. The shiurim are very well attended and attract people from varied Jewish backgrounds. “It is always a pleasure to speak at Midreschet Wollishofen,” says Rav Tabory. “The community consists of well-educated, intellectual people who are very interested in learning Torah.”
Lunch & Learn

November 25, 2008: Rabbi Nati Helfgot ’81, the current chair of the Bible and Jewish Thought departments at YCT, gave a stimulating shiur titled, "Laughter and Despair: The Life and Times of Yitzhak Avinu." The event was attended by Avinoam Erdfarb ’03, Mitch Rich ’95, Yaakov Gross (father of Yigal ’04 PC, Simcha ’05 and Shoshana MO ’08), Sam Moed ’80, Simcha Axelrod ’88, Nathan Lindenbaum ’78 (father of Yehoshua ’01, Atara MO ’03, Meir ’05 and Asher ’08), and Eli Weber ’80, who hosted the Lunch & Learn in his office.

December 18 and 22, 2008: Rabbi Menachem Leibtag ’77 delivered two thought-provoking Lunch & Learn shiurim for alumni in December. The first was held in the office of Allen Friedman ’79 (father of Eli ’06) and the second was hosted in the office of Barry Herzog ’82, father of Ariel ’08. The programs were attended by Daniel Shamah ’98, Ben Lapota, Shai Gerson ’96, Mitch Rich ’95, Nathan Lindenbaum ’78, Avinoam Erdfarb ’03, and Abbe Dienstag, father of Aryeh Dienstag ’99. Rabbi Leibtag discussed “Nes Pach HaShemen: The Meaning of Chanuka in Times of Financial Crisis.” By analyzing the nature, timing and history of Chanuka, Rabbi Leibtag brought an inspiring message of hope and planning for the future, even during uncertain times.

February 24, 2009: On the eve of Rosh Chodesh Adar, Eli Weber ’80 hosted a Dinner & Learn in his office in midtown Manhattan at which Rav Yoel Bin Nun, through a close reading of the final verses of Megillat Esther, revealed the debates, compromises and years of correspondence that eventually resulted in the celebration we know today. Rav Bin Nun’s eye-opening analysis was enjoyed by a large number of YHE alumni and parents, including: Sheldon Chanales (father of Yehuda ’98 and Avi ’07), Yaakov Gross (father of Yigal ’04 PC, Simcha ’05 and Shoshana MO ’08), Eugene Major ’80, Eli Schick ’89, Avinoam Erdfarb ’03, Arye Colton ’81, Dani Bieler ’95, Eli Weber ’81, Gidon Rothstein ’82, Hillel Silvera ’91, Maury Kelman ’83, Jeremy Senderowicz ’95 PC, Elyasaf Schwartz ’01 and Sam Moed ’80.

The Lunch & Learn Program was developed to continue the connection between bogrim, the yeshiva and its Torah. To join or host a Lunch & Learn, please contact Yoel Weiss at: yoel@haretzion.org

Etzion Update

Melava Malkas with the Roshei Yeshiva were held in Jerusalem, Givat Shmuel, Modiin and Beit Shemesh, and attended by hundreds of alumni and their wives. Shown: R’ Medan and R’ Chaim Navon in Modiin.

Dr. Aviad Hacohen, Dean of Sha’arei Mishpat Academic College with daughter Gila at YHE’s first-ever Bat Mitzva Program, attended by over 70 alumni. Migdal Oz, March 2009
The Beit Midrash of Yeshivat Har Etzion

The iconic Beit Midrash of Har Etzion is designed in the shape of an eagle with outstretched wings, evoking the verse “and I will carry you on the wings of eagles,” (Shemot 19:4), G-d’s promise to gather His people from exile and bring them to Israel. The architecture gives physical expression to the yeshiva’s spiritual function, bringing together hundreds of young men from Israel, the U.S., Canada, England, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Ethiopia and other countries, all engaged in intense Torah study from early in the morning until late at night.

While the core of the Yeshiva is the Hesder program with over 350 students, and another 140 from overseas, the vibrancy of the Beit Midrash spans generations. Elementary school children, many of whom are children of alumni, learn with talmidim in after-school programs. Groups of soldiers and high school students come to visit, awed by the palpable excitement in the air. The Darkaynu students bring an enthusiasm and warmth that is contagious. The Roshei Yeshiva, 25 Ramim and more than 80 Kollel members, both single and married, are supplemented by visiting fathers, professionals, laymen and academics, who all join in the harmonious sound of Kol Torah.

“When I first entered the Gush Beit Midrash I was filled with excitement and anticipation. To be learning in the same Beit Midrash with such great talmidei hakhamim is truly inspiring,” says Eitan Lefkowitz, a Shana Aleph talmid from Baltimore, MD. “While I still feel that same excitement learning in the Beit Midrash today, I also find it one of the most comfortable places to be. Yeshiva is now home for me.”

“The Yeshiva is special in that it educates towards achieving the highest standard of learning in every facet of Torah study and encourages each talmid to seriously pursue a subject close to his heart,” says Avishai Magence, a kollel member of Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon’s Halakha Program. “This creates a well-rounded study environment in which you find people fervently engaged in an area of Torah about which they are most passionate. Whenever assistance is needed, an expert on the topic is close by, be it in Tanakh, Halakha, Gemara, Jewish Philosophy or anything else.”

All the people and programs associated with the Beit Midrash share a common thread — the desire to serve others and contribute to Am Yisrael. As Rav Amital loves to tell visitors, “It was important to me that the Beit Midrash have lots of windows. They symbolize our mission: to enable the light of Torah to reach far beyond the confines of the Beit Midrash and illuminate the world.”

Art and Religion at Migdal Oz

On Chanukah 5769, Drs. Judy and Norman Katz helped sponsor a highly successful two-day seminar at the Stella K. Abraham Beit Midrash for Women in Migdal Oz in memory of their daughter, Maidi Katz z”l. The seminar focused on art, literature and music in Israel today and their interaction with religious society and ideas. The seminar brought together sculptors, rabbis, film critics, artists, musicians and philosophers who, together with the students of Migdal Oz, explored the role of art and cultural creativity in religious life. The students were so inspired by the encounter that they initiated an exhibit on campus featuring their own artwork, and have requested a follow-up event. Maidi Katz z”l was further commemorated by Esti Rozenberg, Rosh Beit HaMidrash, who spoke movingly about her and described her deep dedication to women’s Torah learning. Drs. Katz are also the parents of Avi Katz ’76, and the grandparents of Migdal Oz alumnae Dena and Tamar Katz.
Alumni Achievements

Rabbi Menachem Schrader ’72, Director of the Alisa Flatow Overseas Students Program, Nishmat
Rabbi Yaakov Sprung ’74, Head Rabbi, Mizrachi Synagogue, Melbourne, Australia
Rabbi Michael Balinsky ’74, appointed executive vice president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis
Rabbi Herzl Hefter ’75, Ram in Kollel and Yeshiva, Yeshivat Hamivtar
Dr. Yehuda Mirsky ’78, Fellow of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute and the Van Leer Institute, both in Jerusalem and member of the spiritual care group at Shaarei Zedek Medical Center
Akiva Tor (Turk) ’80, from Beit Shemesh, Counselor-General of Israeli Embassy in San Francisco. He was previously stationed in Holland and Thailand.
Rabbi Prof. Mordechai Cohen ’82, Prof. of Bible and Associate Dean of Bernard Revel Graduate School
Rabbi Chanoch Waxman ’84, Ram, Yeshivat Hamivtar
Rabbi Zvi Engel ’92, Rabbi of Congregation Or Torah in Skokie, IL
Rabbi Jeffrey Kobrin ’92 will assume the title of Principal of the North Shore Hebrew Academy Middle School
Avi Shmidman ’92, submitted a doctoral dissertation to Bar-Ilan University on the 233 piyutim for Birkat HaMazon found in the Cairo Geniza
Aaron Ross ’92, completed his doctorate (Ed.D.) at YU’s Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education
Rabbi Aharon Frazer ’94, founder of an on-line learning program for recent college graduates, www.orachmishor.org
Rabbi Barry Kislowicz ’95, head of the Fuchs Mizrachi Lower School and Junior High School
Rabbi Shmuel ’95 and Talya Bloom, on shlichut in Hamilton, Ontario in Canada for Bnei Akiva
Rabbi Chaim Strauchler ’95, Rabbi of Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, Toronto, Canada
Rabbi Benjy Rickman ’96, Head of Kodesh, King David School, Manchester, England
Rabbi Steven Exler ’98, Associate Rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, NY
Rabbi Danny Eisenberg ’98, Lecturer and Assistant Rabbi for the Jewish Learning Centre, Sydney, Australia
Rabbi Uzi Beer ’98, Teacher at Ramaz Upper School and Assistant Rabbi at Congregation Israel in Springfield, NJ
Rabbi Yaakov S. Jaffe ’98, Limudei Kodesh teacher, Maimonides High School, Boston, MA
Rabbi Jonathan Snowbell ’98, student member at Yeshivat Hamivtar in Efrat and a regular contributor to KMTT Torah podcasts of Yeshivat Har Etzion
Dr. Rafi Lefkowitz ’00 graduated UCLA Medical School
Rabbi Dov Huff ’00, teaching at Maimonides School, Boston, MA
Rabbi Eli Cohn ’00, Semicha from YU, teaching at MTA
Shua Lindenbaum ’01, Overseas Program Coordinator in the Yeshivat Hesder in Petach Tikva
Rabbi Michael Stein ’02, Associate Rabbi, Riverdale Jewish Center, NY
David Rendsburg ’04 PC working for Hazon, a Jewish environmental group based in New York
Akiva Fleischmann ’05 PC, teaching at Bi-Cultural Day School in Stamford, CT

Alumni News

Marriages
Shaul Epstein ’98 and Sara Libby Robinson
Josh Strauss ’99 and Danielle Savitsky
Mordechai Raskas ’99 and Jennifer Rubin
Yaki Rydzinski ’99 and Adina Levine
Aviyoel Sokol ’99 and Pirchit Edri
Chaim Schramm ’01 and Lisa Glass
Avi-Gil Chaitovsky ’01 and Tamar Snyder
Ilan Cohen ’01 and Anna Hertzberg
Gideon Black ’01 and Aliza Berkowitz
Binyamin Kleinman ’01 and Anya Salganik
Avi Anouchi ’02 and Mor Tetz
Noam Lockshin ’02 and Etta Abramson
Doron Hindin ’02 and Miriam Rapaport
Irwin Shuman ’02 and Esther Weinberg
Dan Rosenblatt ’03 and Daniela Wieser
Moshe Ariel Rosensweig ’03 and Jackie Fast
Yehoshua Mandel ’03 and Aylana Reiss
Howie Nuer ’08 PC and Miriam Livni

Marriages of Children
Rav Michael ’03 and Prof. Smadar Rosensweig on the marriage of Moshe Ariel ’03 and Jackie Fast

Births
Nati Helfgot ’81 and Rachel Brenner, Yakir Noam, NYC
David ’82 and Heidi Stokar, Samuel Elijah, Edison, NJ
Yuri Simon ’86 and Allie Alperovitch, Hannah Elizabeth (Elisha Chana), NYC

Don’t see your news here? Please mail details to: shira@etzion.org.il and we will be happy to post it.
Births of Grandchildren

Shael ‘72 and Sabra Frimer on the birth of Emuna Miriam to their daughter Shira and Achiam Tanami
Alan ‘72 and Brenda Pritzker on the birth of Donny ‘02 and Arielle Rosenberg, Simcha Yonatan Yaakov, Riverdale, NY
Steven ‘02 and Ariella Goldsmith, twins: Talya Rivka and Eitan, Efrat

Condolences

Aryeh Bubis ‘73 on the loss of his father, Mr. Norman (Nahum) Bubis z”l
Rabbi Howie Balter ‘79, on the loss of his father Mr. David Balter z”l
Avi Blidstein ‘86H, on the loss of his wife, Ilana z”l
Michael Raskas ‘87, Aliza (Raskas) Major; and Tamar (Raskas) Benovitz on the loss of their mother, Mrs. Sheri Raskas z”l, sister of Board member, David Grauer and to the entire family.
Darren ‘87 and Justin ‘93 Rockman on the loss of their father, Mr. Ian Rockman z”l

Rachel Moriah Koppel (David ‘77 and Shira), Efrat
Yehuda Zvi Aryeh Berger (Michael ‘80 and Elisheva), Atlanta, GA
Simmy Borodach (Sam ‘81 and Patty), Teaneck, NJ

To the extended Cotton and Koschitzky families on the loss of Riva Koschitzky z”l, wife of Joel Koschitzky, mother of Yedidya ‘05H, Yekutiel ‘07H and Amitai, daughter of Joey and Annette Colton, and sister of Yossi Colton ‘76, Chairman of the Board Arye Colton ‘81 and Hadassa Klein.

Tehilla Chaya Bejell (Aharon ‘75 and Leora), Efrat
Netanel Lerner (Eli ‘75 and Sharon), Ramat Beit Shemesh
Tehilla Chaya Bejell (Aharon ‘75 and Leora), Efrat

PC = Post-College  H = Hesder

Condolences

Aryeh Bubis ‘73 on the loss of his father, Mr. Norman (Nahum) Bubis z”l
Rabbi Howie Balter ‘79, on the loss of his father Mr. David Balter z”l
Avi Blidstein ‘86H, on the loss of his wife, Ilana z”l
Michael Raskas ‘87, Aliza (Raskas) Major; and Tamar (Raskas) Benovitz on the loss of their mother, Mrs. Sheri Raskas z”l, sister of Board member, David Grauer and to the entire family.
Darren ‘87 and Justin ‘93 Rockman on the loss of their father, Mr. Ian Rockman z”l

Rachel Moriah Koppel (David ‘77 and Shira), Efrat
Yehuda Zvi Aryeh Berger (Michael ‘80 and Elisheva), Atlanta, GA
Simmy Borodach (Sam ‘81 and Patty), Teaneck, NJ

To the extended Cotton and Koschitzky families on the loss of Riva Koschitzky z”l, wife of Joel Koschitzky, mother of Yedidya ‘05H, Yekutiel ‘07H and Amitai, daughter of Joey and Annette Colton, and sister of Yossi Colton ‘76, Chairman of the Board Arye Colton ‘81 and Hadassa Klein.

Tehilla Chaya Bejell (Aharon ‘75 and Leora), Efrat
Netanel Lerner (Eli ‘75 and Sharon), Ramat Beit Shemesh
Tehilla Chaya Bejell (Aharon ‘75 and Leora), Efrat
Recent Publications

Be’Emunato, the Story of Harav Yehuda Amital (Hebrew) by Elyashiv Reichner. Yedioth Aharonot Books. Rav Amital, born Yehuda Klein, survived the WWII labor camps of Hungary and went on to become a renowned educator, the founding Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion, and a Minister in the Israeli Government. The story of Rav Amital’s life is the story of destruction and redemption, of despair and hope. The author studied in Yeshivat Har Etzion and is also the son of Rav Naftali Reichner of Machzor Aleph.

Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought by Rabbi Dr. Joshua Berman. Oxford University Press. In this volume, Rabbi Berman ’82-84, lecturer in Tanakh at Bar-Ilan University and Associate Fellow at the Shalem Center; examines the Tanakh as a document of social and political thought. British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes: “Joshua Berman has written a superb, scholarly and paradigm-shifting work on the Hebrew Bible as perhaps the first attempt to create a truly egalitarian society…I commend it highly.”

Gray Matter, Vol. III, by Rabbi Chaim Jachter ‘81 with Rabbi Ezra Frazer ’96. Rabbi Chaim (Howard) Jachter ’81 selects halakhic topics of relevance and interest to contemporary Jews and explores them in a clear, comprehensive style. Rav Amital and Rav Lichtenstein are both widely quoted in this latest volume, which deals with topics such as archaeology and halakha, civilian casualties during war and the acceptability of DNA evidence in Beit Din.

Ma’Or HaTarah Series on Parshat Hashavua (Hebrew) by Moshe “Moshko” Moskovic. Published by Yeshivat Har Etzion and Yad Shapira. In this series, Moshko, the founder of modern-day Gush Etzion, reads the Chumash in the light of a wide range of commentaries from different periods that emphasize the Jewish connection to Eretz Yisrael. A book launch held at Heichal Shlomo, Jerusalem, featured a panel discussion with Harav Yehuda Amital, Harav Aharon Lichtenstein, Dr. Aviad Hacohen, Dean of Sha’arei Mishpat Academic College, and Dr. Tzvi Tzameret, Director of Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi.

In the Footsteps of the Kuzari: An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy, Vol. II, by Prof. Shalom Rosenberg. Yashar Books. Noted Orthodox thinker Prof. Shalom Rosenberg surveys the views of Jewish philosophers through the ages and shows how they can be transformed into a compelling worldview for the postmodern age. Intellectually stimulating and creative, this important work made large waves when it originally appeared in Hebrew and is now being offered to the English-reading public. Prof. Rosenberg is a veteran lecturer at Herzog College and authored the VBM series “Jewish Philosophy Confronts the Modern World.”

Shiurei Harav Lichtenstein on Masekhet Gittin (Hebrew). Yeshivat Har Etzion Press. We are pleased to announce that the 7th sefer in the popular Shiurei HaRav Lichtenstein series is now available, this one on Masekhet Gittin. To order: office@etzion.org.il

For more publications, see: www.haretzion.org/sfarim.htm