

Dear Friends,

Every year, as Pesach brings its renewed vibrancy, we at the Mechina have a golden opportunity to notice the change happening among our students. Just a few months ago, we were given a gift- 53 new students in our First-Year Program. All of them came with their unique personal challenges and hesitations- yet with hope to complete the year as new young men with bright new futures.

This change is indeed unfolding before our eyes, every day! Thanks to the Mechina's intensive program with its physical, spiritual and mental challenges, our precious students are discovering themselves anew. They continue to gain a new awareness of their true abilities and personalities, and strong motivation to succeed in the IDF in particular and in life in general. Nothing will stop them or impede their enthusiasm.

We are so privileged to witness this process and share the success together with you.

The Torch Relay

Despite the rainy weather, we decided not to give up on this year's 11th Torch Relay in Memory of the Fallen of the Battle of Bint Jbel (the battle in which Tamir graduate and CEO, Avichai Yaakov, fought). Like every year, we began with a moving ceremony on Chanuka in Beit Horon at the monument in memory of Sgt. Ohad Klausner HYD. At the ceremony, Ohad's father movingly told us that as the years go by, the story of the Battle and the soldiers who fell are becoming forgotten by the masses and the media. Therefore, every year, and particularly this year, when he sees the Mechina begin the Relay with a ceremony in memory of his son, it shows that his dear son has not been forgotten and that there are people who are even willing to run 260 kilometers – half the length of Israel – in his memory.

Due to the inclement weather, we thought the students might not be able to handle the cold and rain. To our surprise, the students didn't give in. They ran despite the rain, the puddles, and the cold.

Like every year, as we reached the entrance to Katzrin, the city's residents and the students' parents joined us by marching alongside the students, holding torches. The relay was summed-up by the lighting of Chanuka candles in a beautiful ceremony at the Mechina.

"After six months at the Mechina, I can say that two things enable me to keep progressing: the warm treatment here, and the staff's unconditional way of accepting me. I hope to enlist in an IDF Special Unit and succeed at my goals in life."

Mugas A., First-Year Program Student at the Mechina from an New Immigrant Ethiopian family

"I feel like I've found family here. Everyone helps out everyone else. I've learned to take responsibility, to take control."
Ro'i A., First-Year Program Student at the Mechina



Advanced Staff Training

This year we've extended special efforts in providing advanced training for our staff through educational seminars on various topics, both on-campus and off-campus. Staff members really value these seminars, saying they add significantly to their teaching and mentoring capabilities.

We deeply thank the Hochstein Foundation for enabling this intensive advanced training program.

Tamir Gets its First New Caravan

Due to the harsh wear-and-tear of the current student cabins at the Mechina, serious efforts are being made to exchange them with stronger, larger pre-fab caravans. About a month ago, thanks to the MZ Foundation in San Francisco, Tamir received a new caravan as living quarters for its students. We are very grateful and hope this will herald the full replacement of all the old cabins at the Mechina to enable more decent living conditions for our students.

Tamir's Second-Year Program Students Enlist in the IDF

Our Second-Year Program students recently completed an amazing year-and-a-half at the Mechina and have enlisted in the IDF as mature, devoted soldiers to their country and Israeli society. They have joined many combat and even elite units, including the Armored, Paratrooper, Givati, Artillery, Nachal, and Golani Units, as well as the Air Force! We are so proud of them!

An Article about the Tamir Mechina in Los Angeles

ASSISTING ISRAELI YOUTH ON THE PERIPHERY HITS HOME IN LA

December 29th, 2016. Reprinted with permission.

Last September, Michal Natan from the Tamir Pre-IDF Preparatory Program in Israel's Golan Heights, helped the Los Angeles community become more aware of an important yet overlooked issue facing Israeli society: the unique challenges faced by Israeli youth from at-risk peripheries. For decades, Israel's peripheries have fared worse on the national financial spectrum than locales in Central Israel. Due to generations of neglect as well as domestic issues, youth from these areas commonly believe their misfortune is pre-determined, an unchangeable product of geography and destiny. Thus, their motivation to serve productively in the IDF and subsequently strive for higher education to break out of poverty has been traditionally low, if existing at all.

Tamir's IDF preparatory program for high school graduates succeeds in exposing these young men to their dormant talents and their true ability to succeed in life and even influence Israeli society as a whole.

At an L.A. event honoring these students and the Tamir Program, Mrs. Natan explained to the L.A. community how Tamir's four-point program succeeds in creating such a transformation in the students: texts exploring Jewish values provide inspiration and spiritual preparation as they prepare for the military; physically challenging hikes, such as a grueling 60 km trek across Israel's width, expose these future soldiers to their true, underestimated abilities while they learn to rely on one another; intensive volunteering activities with children,

the elderly and Holocaust survivors, show them their ability to significantly influence their surroundings; and they gain leadership and empowerment skills, such as public speaking, in special seminars provided throughout the year.

The most famous of its 550 students is Tamir's CEO and a graduate of its first class, Sgt. Avichai Yaakov. Avichai was awarded Israel's highest medal for bravery, the Ittur HaOz, for saving his soldiers under fire in the Battle of Bint J'bel in Lebanon. Avichai says that without the values he learned at Tamir he would not have acted the way he did that day.

The Small family from L.A. heard about the program and decided to come together and financially adopt one of the students – the parents, married children and spouses all taking part. "Having our family adopt a Tamir soldier who will be serving and protecting the Land of Israel is an honor to our family and an opportunity to connect to a future Israeli soldier," Freda Small explains. "Our family devotion to the Tamir Mechina is a heartfelt connection to those who risk their lives to protect the Land of Israel."

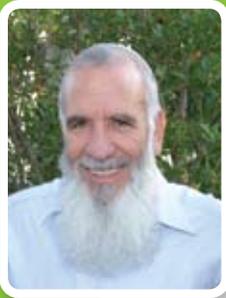
L.A. schools and shuls have also come together to take part.

The Mechina's New "Adopt-a-Student Program" in the U.S.

The Mechina recently began a beautiful adoption program in which individuals, shuls, schools, and Bar/Bat Mitzvas "adopt" Mechina students from complex backgrounds, enabling them to undergo the Mechina's transformational process. Communities from across the U.S. are becoming familiar with the various students they have adopted via email and Skype, and particularly when they visit Israel.

Prior to Yom Hazikaron, Avichai and Michal will travel to those communities and give a presentation in which Avichai will speak about the soldiers from the Battle of Bint J'bel (in which Avichai fought and was awarded the IDF's Medal of Bravery) and tell his own story. The talk includes a presentation with movie clips from the battle. You and your community have the opportunity to directly connect with a Mechina student and watch him become an IDF soldier dedicated to Israel's success and his own future.





From the Dean of the Mechina, Rabbi Ya'ish Hanuna

Dear Friends,

How quickly the year goes by and how far we've come with our students! How unfortunate it is you're not here to witness your part in their progress. At least we can share the nachat by updating you on our students' success.

The upcoming Pesach holiday indeed commemorates the time we left bondage for freedom. True freedom, however, is not only freedom from physical slavery, but also the unique form of freedom Am Yisrael brings to the world, as one, in order to unify all humanity in its quest for true [spiritual] freedom. We educate our students towards this kind of freedom, and you are our partners in this endeavor.

May we all merit freedom from every hardship. Chag Sameach!

Rabbi Ya'ish Chanuna

To Our Dear Friends and Supporters,

One of the central parts of the Pesach Haggada is taken from the commandment to recite words of thanksgiving when bringing the First Fruits to the Beit Hamikdash:

"And the Egyptians were evil to us and oppressed us, giving us harsh tasks".

Various explanations have been offered for why this particular verse was chosen to be recited at the Seder. Maimonides, in the third chapter of his Guide to the Perplexed, writes: "The recitation when bringing the First Fruits **inculcates the trait of humility**. This is because the person takes his basket upon his shoulders, reminding him of G-d's kindness and pleasantness towards him, telling people that serving G-d includes remembering his travails once things improve. This concept is often emphasized in the Torah..."

Dear Friends and Partners- every year, we at the Mechina accept youth who primarily come from Israel's peripheries, some of them with difficult pasts. The Mechina, under Rabbi Ya'ish's and the staff's professional and devoted leadership, helps them become a positive-thinking group of students who strive to contribute to society in their army service and as citizens later on.

We have no doubt that your support is a central pillar of the Mechina's success, and we are very grateful to you.

"And you will rejoice in all the goodness Hashem, your G-d, has given you and your families..."

With wishes for a happy and kosher Pesach,

פסח שמח וכשר

In friendship and great appreciation,
Avichai and Michal

We Look Forward to Your Continued Partnership in Assisting Israel's Younger Generation

For tax-deductible check donations:
Write check to "PEF Israel Endowment Funds, Inc.," earmarked for Tamir, and send to 630 Third Ave., Ste. 1501, New York, NY 10017.

For tax-deductible money transfer via bank account:
Account name: PEF Israel Endowment Funds, Inc.

ABA: 026009768, Account: 03-2693-2.
Include a memo earmarking the donation for Tamir, and then notify us of the amount at:
michalnatan1959@gmail.com

For online tax-deductible credit card donations:
www.israelgives.org, and type "Tamir" in the search field.

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