



### In This Issue

**Spotlight on Yeshiva:**  
Emanah Seminar

**Spotlight on Yeshiva:**  
Alumni return for college  
break

**Spotlight on Yeshiva:**  
Alumni Shabbat

**Sports Update**

**Spotlight on Alumni: YNA**  
Alumni Family are there  
for each other

### **Best of Behar, Bechukosai, Bamidbar, Nasso, Shlach 5768**

#### **Shabbat in Chevron**

*By Jordan Kestenbaum, Shana Alef, HAFTR*

The ancient and holy city of Hebron has been the subject of intense political debate from the moment it was captured by the Israeli Army in 1967. Although I was raised in a staunchly Zionist Orthodox environment, my view on the issue was highly ambivalent. Being fully aware how crucial every inch of land under Israeli sovereignty was for its survival, I was still uncertain whether holding on to it was worth endangering the lives of civilians as well as soldiers. To me Hebron was nothing more than a place embroiled in the turmoil of what is known as "the territories."

My experience this past Shabbat caused me to view things from a totally different perspective. As we entered the city in our bulletproof bus I began to wonder why anyone would want to subject themselves and their families to a life filled with fear and trepidation.

We sang Kabbalat Shabbat in Ma'arat HaMachpela with such great fervor and deveikut to Hashem that I felt that our forefathers buried there were joining us in welcoming Shabbat HaMalka. I cannot remember a more uplifting moment in all of my young life. We spent two hours davening together with Jews from all different walks of life - how fitting as we prepare for Matan Torah which the united Jewish nation accepted "keish echad belev echad" "like one person with one heart" (Rashi Shmot 19:2).

We were escorted to Yeshivat Shavei Hebron by countless soldiers. During the walk, the entire Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh joined hands in song, feeling great pride and totally oblivious to our surroundings. Observers who would have stared and wondered who these naïve and carefree young men were could not possibly understand the emotional high we were all feeling at that moment.

As we were about to take our seats for the Shabbat meal, I remarked to a friend how disappointing it would be if the local Israelis and the Americans were to sit on opposite sides of the dining room. How wrong I was - we sat together as if we had been lifelong friends. I cannot begin to describe the electrifying atmosphere and any attempt to do so would not possibly do justice to the sense of joy and pride I was feeling.

On Shabbat afternoon we took a tour that, if my feelings had not changed enough already, was to completely change my perception of life in Hebron. We are all under the impression that the residents live with a constant sense of fear and trepidation - what right do they have to live in such a hostile area and place their families in danger? I used to have such thoughts - can you imagine sending your children to the playground under heavy IDF guard? During the tour we met Jews trying their hardest to maintain a normal life - they were not afraid they were rather confident that they were doing the right thing. These people to me were not only pioneers but the backbone and heart and soul of our great nation known as Am Yisrael. Although they gave up many of the luxuries we are so accustomed to, yet I soon saw that their biggest luxury was to have the privilege of living in Israel, in this special place. I learned so many lessons this Shabbat, I would like to end with a quote from Yonatan Netanyahu: "it is worth far more to die for a cause than to live life without one."

### **HaRav Lipman Podolsky - One Year Later**

By Rav Yaakov Thaler

Has it really been a whole year since the untimely tragic passing of our dear friend and Rebbe HaRav Lipman Asher Podolsky zt"l? Not just a year - a leap year - thirteen months without HaRav Podolsky!

The Yeshiva began commemorating his yahrtzeit by visiting his grave at Har HaMenuchot. Staff members and Shana Bet students joined the Podolsky family in reciting Tehillim by the kever. We returned to the Yeshiva where the family, the entire Yeshiva, and many alumni and friends crowded in the Beit Midrash to remember HaRav Podolsky. The hespedim began promptly at 7:30 with the goal of concluding by 8:00 so as not to interfere with night seder - this is certainly what HaRav Podolsky would have wanted.

Inspiring words were delivered by our Rosh Yeshiva HaRav Aharon Bina Shlit"a, by HaRav Avigdor Nebenzahl Shlit"a, and by HaRav Amos Luban Shlit"a. All three speakers focused on HaRav Podolsky's striving for growth even during times of unimaginable suffering - a situation where slacks in ruchniyus would certainly be understood.

As a student during HaRav Podolsky's first year teaching in our Yeshiva, I remember the moment he would arrive to deliver his Thursday night schmoozen at 10:15 PM, we were mesmerized by his charisma and by the inspiration we received from these

sichot.

His words focused on intellectual honesty, personal growth, commitment to keeping all the mitzvot at all times, and helping others. The following story illustrates that HaRav Podolsky certainly practiced what he preached. As a young yeshiva bachur, he was once invited to be a guest for a Shabbat meal at the home of a married friend. After Hamotzi, two cans of tuna were placed on the table. The idea of tuna as a Shabbat appetizer seemed a bit odd, but he was horrified to find out that this was the main course! He was unable to tolerate such a situation and immediately at the conclusion of Shabbat he and a friend brainstormed how they could help this needy family which was obviously in dire financial straits. This resulted in the founding of Keren Ezrat Shabbat. Many years were spent collecting money to do his best to make sure that no family would have to eat tuna in place of chicken at their Seudat Shabbat.

HaRav Podolsky dedicated his life to inspiring students to personal growth without settling for mediocrity, that we must dedicate our lives to climbing to greater and greater heights in avodat Hashem.

When Rav Podolsky was already very ill, I went to visit him in his Old City apartment. I explained to him that I was preparing a shiur about illness based on Parshat Vayechi and why it was that Yaakov Avinu asked Hashem for the opportunity to die from illness rather than a sudden death with a sneeze (see Torah Temimah on Bereishit 48:1).

I asked him, as a person unfortunately suffering from an illness, whether he had any insights. His response was a classic and I believe it sums up just who this special person was. He looked at me and said: "Illness is a good thing!"

I was taken aback by his response, and asked him: "why?"

His response: "I feel I am a far better person now than I was prior to my illness."

I was stunned.

HaRav Podolsky, a man who had dedicated his entire life to helping and inspiring others, felt that he had not yet reached his potential. His terrible illness is good because he is now a much better person. What an incredible perspective on life. To Rav Podolsky life was growth. He truly practiced what he preached.

As Rav Bina stated this week: "To his parents and children there is no nechama." For Rav Podolsky's students however there is a small nechama. The first of a number of sefarim of Rav Podolsky's writings was published this week, and handed out to all who attended the azkara. We can continue to learn from our great Rebbe through his writings - continuing our growth while at the same time providing Rav Podolsky's neshama with a continued aliya. Yehi zichro baruch.

### **A Letter of Thanks and Appreciation to Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh**

Last week I had a medical scare. Baruch Hashem with medical attention, medication, and siata dishmaya I'm getting better. I would like to publicly thank Hashem Yisbarach for my Refuah and the YNA family for their support.

As I nervously awaited my diagnosis in the emergency room, three students quickly arrived to stay with me. I heard that HaRav Bina led the Yeshiva in an emotional Tefila for my well being. Throughout the next few days 28 people from the Yeshiva

visited me and numerous others called to wish me a speedy recovery. A few students even went to my house to help my wife prepare for Shabbat.

I have a deep appreciation for Rav Bina who was in touch and involved in all aspects of my recovery. On the night I was in the E.R., I knew the Rosh HaYeshiva planned to leave the Yeshiva at 2:00 AM. My CT scan was at 3:00 AM, so I didn't want to call the Rosh HaYeshiva and chance waking him up with my diagnosis. At 4:30 AM I received a phone call from the Rosh HaYeshiva. I asked Rav Bina what he was doing up at this time. His response was, "I couldn't fall asleep, I was worried about you." It is an honor and a privilege to be part of the extensive Netiv Aryeh family. Mi k'amcha Yisrael!

Rav Aryeh Varon has been a valued member of the YNA Educational Staff for many years

### **Yom Yerushalayim and Shabbaton in Moshav Mattityahu**

By Yossi Davis (5767) YU Pre-Med

It all happened so quickly. Sunday morning my ticket was booked, Monday I packed, and Tuesday morning I was on my way to Newark International airport. It was only once I got on the plane to Israel that I was able to breathe and think about my situation. I had not told a single one of my friends or Rabbeim that I was coming to Yeshiva, I had not arranged for a place to sleep, and I had no idea what I was going to do for Shabbat. The truth is I really did not even know when I was returning to America.

At three o'clock in the morning on Yom Yerushalayim, dancing to the Kotel from Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav (as the annual tradition dictated) hand in hand with a wildly energetic Israeli, I thought about how amazing it was that everything had worked out so well. I had surprised all of my friends and rabbeim, been given a bed in the Yeshiva dorms, and attended the Shanna Bet Shabbaton in Moshav Matityahu.

I felt great being back at Yeshiva. Not only did I feel very welcome, but I felt missed. Nobody had forgotten about me. In fact, because I only found out about the Shabbaton when I arrived in Israel, I had not had a chance to sign up for it. Little did I know that the second my friends found out that I was in Israel, they signed me up for the Shabbaton. When I called Rav Varon, who was organizing the Shabbaton, and asked him if there would be a spot for me, he said that it was funny I should ask because everything was already taken care of.

The Shabbaton was amazing. Although I was really just a visitor, I felt like I had been in Yeshiva the entire year. After arriving to the moshav and getting ready for Shabbat, we davened Kabalat Shabbat, ate at our hosts' homes, and went to an exhilarating Friday night oneg at Rav Donnie Bader's house. Then, almost every Shanna Bet student spoke about his experiences and reflections as he left Yeshiva and the five Rabbeim who were on the Shabbaton, Rav Eisenstein, Rav Varon, Rav Ginsberg, Rav Ron, and Rav Donnie Bader, each gave touching words of thanks for a great two years. The Rabbeim also gave words of encouragement and told everyone to keep in touch with the Yeshiva and remember everything we learned. They didn't want us to forget.

Immersed in a sea of gigantic white knit kippot which had just reached the Kotel plaza, I remembered that this idea of not forgetting was something that Rav Bina had expressed on erev Yom Yerushalayim. "Az it's human nature to forget," he said. He went on to speak about how now when Jewish people spend time in Yerushalayim, they often forget what it cost to reclaim Yerushalayim. He told us in detail about how dangerous Israel was during the 1948 War of Independence and about the sacrifices

that he and his family had to make. He said that if someone had told him then that in 1967 Yerushalayim would be back in Jewish hands and that in 2008 he would be celebrating the 41st anniversary of recapturing Yerushalayim, he would have called them crazy. The new state of Israel was in such a dire situation that on the eve of the Independence War the government prepared 50,000 graves for all of the people it thought would perish! After retelling just a few of the terrors of the War of Independence, he really put the triumph of the Six Day War into context.

Having finally arrived at the kotel from Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav, I couldn't help imagining the 1967 Israeli soldiers crying and singing. I couldn't help thinking of all of those who had lost their lives for the simple crime of longing for Israel and Yerushalayim. I couldn't forget that just months ago, there were six boys who were killed in cold blood while learning at the very Yeshiva whose students were at the kotel singing Im Eshakachech Yerushalayim. Wiping the sweat from my brow after the joyous dancing, I realized that the feeling I got from Yom Yerushalayim at the kotel wasn't the feeling of remembrance which I got on Yom Hazikaron last year, but rather it was a feeling of not forgetting.

Though the difference between remembering and not forgetting seems slight, they are really distinct experiences. To remember something, all one has to do is dig through one's mind and pull out memories and thoughts. To not forget, is something very different. To not forget something means that you always have it with you in your mind. There is no searching your mind for a memory or thought because it is always subconsciously present. My friends and Rabbeim showed that they had not forgotten me. The Rabbeim on the Shabbaton urged us not to forget our learning or the Yeshiva. The blissful sensation that I felt from being at the kotel that night was one that I could never forget. To be remembered is nice, but to not be forgotten is something special.

### **End of the Year Letter from the Rosh HaYeshiva, Shlit"א**

Dear students, alumni, parents, and friends,

I must take a moment to thank the greatest and most loyal yeshiva staff in the world. They are also one of the largest and are available late into the night. It is our philosophy to look at each boy as our only child, because each one will be building forth the next generation.

Like I said this past Seudat Shlishit, many Yeshivot teach, but we try to also educate. Leaving students - you had better know that we love you a lot. The Sforno in last week's parsha (11,12) explains that children know their parents love them because they have a physical and emotional connection. A Rebbe - one is not so sure. Each student at some point in the year realizes how much we love them.

You cannot run away from your family and you cannot run away from G-d. No matter how much you run, G-d and your parents will still be there, and so will we. The minute you entered the Netiv Aryeh building, you joined the Netiv Aryeh family for life.

I must also thank the parents who trusted us with their precious children. Stay in touch, have a good summer b'ruchniut ub'gashmiut.

Use this area to provide your subscribers information about your organization.

**Sincerely,**

HaRav Aharon Bina, Netiv Aryeh  
Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh

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