

Otzem at High Intensity

מכינה חרונית נצ"מ

בעצימות גבוהה

News and Updates From Mechinat Otzem

Atzmona - Chalutza | end of 5779



Rav Re'i Peretz's words to the talmudim as he entered his role as rosh mechina:

"Here I am, deficient in meritorious deeds, trembling and awe-stricken from fear of the One who is enthroned on the praises of Israel, standing and pleading before Him on behalf of His people Israel who have sent me, though I am unworthy and unqualified for the task."

I'll begin with the words of Moshe Rabeinu- "I am not a man of words", and the words of Yermiyahu - "See that I know nothing for I am but a child". I'll recall here the reply of Rav Kook z"tl when he was asked to be the rabbi of Yerushalayim - "I am too small to bear this holy burden that only a select few are suitable for, but if this holy city which is my whole wellspring demands it- I cannot refuse".

I feel like I am entering very large shoes in those of Mori V'rabi, my father Shlit"a who has taught me all I know in ahavat Yisrael and dedication to klal Yisrael.

I grew up without a father who came home every evening. When I was a young boy he was an avreich learning day and night in the kollel at Yeshivat HaKotel. At wartime he would be gone flying and saving Israel. Since the mechina was founded, he has dedicated himself entirely to it and has hardly been home.

That was my upbringing, I breathed it in and it built me up - I was taught that when you are called upon for the Torah, Hashem and Israel you go forth and say "Here I am".

We are zoche to be part of a national task and it is a source of tremendous happiness and joy to grow and provide for others in their Torah-learning, in a connection to Eretz Yisrael all through a love of Israel.

I am elated by the tremendous privilege to be here and to be an emissary of the public and of magnificent people.

The following is told about the Netzi"v of Volozhin:

"Once a father brought his son to the yeshiva. The Netzi"v tested him and saw that he was a qualified student. As the father was leaving he said in reverence, "Rabenu, this son of mine is an only child and beg of you to take care of his health as well."

The Netzi"v replied to the father, "Your son is an only child, one and only. My children number 400 talmidim and they are all lone children to me and I am obligated to care for them".

That is how I feel towards you, my dear students, who all became my children overnight to care for your growth and progress.

It's amazing to see how things move at the mechina- neshamas full of the strength of Eretz Yisrael, of a thirst for Torah and purity who are ready to sacrifice so much for it. We will carry on with increasing strength!



Best Wishes to Rav Raffi!

"Here I am"

We knew that you would reply to this great task and calling exactly as you taught us. We have been marching in your footsteps for 26 years in the path of the Torah of Geulah with tremendous love for our nation, our generation and all of mankind. We strengthen your hands- blessing you with success.
Love,
Mechina students and staff



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“Get Up and Walk the Land!”

In the mechina we learn to love the land actively - we went hiking in the Zin Valley in the Negev and in Makhtesh Ramon, as well as navigating in the Goral Hills and near Arad. Shana Bet continued with trips near the Kinneret and in the Eilat Mountains.



Atzmona Ladies Have a Home!

This year marks the opening of a midrasha for girls looking for a similar experience- one of ruach, Torah, strength and direction before or after national service.

We invite you and all of our friends to spread the word to women who aspire to be part of a new place that is quickly taking shape.

Staying Oriented - Navigating and Survival

“Leaving to navigate, the map is closed, the guide stays behind, it’s time to use what you worked on in the last few hours.”

Navigating is a time to encounter yourself, but the preparation time determines who you will be during the navigation: It saves you from getting lost and lets you meet your goals, making sure that you aren’t missing possible short-cuts and and that nothing is left blurry come time to be tested.

Navigating is more than a comparison to life, it is our first step in the real world- a world in which effort and results correspond and there are no excuses, where you need to show results.

“This world is likened to land and the world to come to sea, prepare yourself in the corridor so that you may enter the hall.” Kadima, to work!

In mechina we set goals for life, but it’s also important to know not to get lost along the way...

Our talmidim returned from happily from Sukkot break straight into a series of navigations in the Goral hills led by Rav Amir and Elad Bastiker.

This was after the four day desert navigating and survival series before last Pesach that took place near Arad with the special teams of the JNF facilitating our trip.



“מה נעים ומתוק אור קודש זה של תורה
לשמה בארץ החיים בארץ המדה שעיני ה' בה”
(דברים כ"ד)

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תוכנית ארז**

מדרשה צומחת בחולות מבית מכינת “עוצם”
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הרב אריאל איגרא ועוד מרבני המכינה ונשות החלוציות

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ליצור חברה ולהיות שליחה
למד: את המשכיות, להתפלל ולעבוד את ה'
לקבל כלים בבניית חזיונות ומשפחה



Gemara: Hadran Alach v"Hadran Alan- "We Shall Return To You and You Shall Return To Us" - Siyumei Masechtot

Last year we experienced much nachos and many uplifting moments and celebrations. We began in Elul with everyone learning Masechet Rosh Hashana together; we then moved on to finish Ta'anit just after Chanukah and nearly all of our shana alef talmudim made a siyum on Megillah leading up to Purim. Also worth noting is sizable groups of shana bet students who finished Brachot, Sukkah, and Ta'anit in a modest fashion in the best midrash - "ashreichem talmidei chachamim".



The Mechina Stands Facing the Rising Sun - Solar

As part of a long-term process managed by Rav Yuval Tzur to make the mechina more efficient, new solar panels were installed on the roofs of the mechina's buildings. Hundreds of meters of panels as well as cables and boxes were installed and we hardly felt it. God willing this will give us a push to stabilize the foundation of the mechina. "If there is no flour, there is no Torah."



Atzmona - Looking Forward

Rav Aharon Tzohar began functioning as the educational director of the machina. He has been very active and will continue in his role guiding and directing talmidim - beginning with high-school aged visitors and continuing to accompany them as they progress and advance. He led the students as they danced among the tens of thousands who went to celebrate Yom Yerushalayim in the streets of the capital and uplifted the celebration to a special place. We wish him all the best!

Rav Netanel Tachover is responsible for shana alef this year and by his side is Rav Yaki Weiss who has been leading shana bet for many good years.

We receive with bracha the mechina's new manager, David Bar Chai, who is filling the shoes of Rav Yuval Tzur with enthusiasm and skill.



The Gevurah Race

The Gevurah Race takes place mid-winter as we get fired up before Chanukah. We were honored by the presence of the families of fallen soldiers who studied at the mechina as well as soldiers and commanders from Nachal, Tzanchanim, Golani and the Commando Battalion. We were happy to welcome a Team from the Maglan unit with our former students among the soldiers leading the way.



Atzmona - A Return To Self - Post-Army Program

It is great having The recently released draft of soldiers back in the beit midrash after their release from the army. It's great to see our talmidim, some of whom are still currently enlisted and on leave from the army, coming back to shape their future by strengthening their connection to holiness and their friends. This was in addition to the Elul program which catered students on their semester break from university. "Planted in the house of Hashem - In the courts of our God they will flourish."

Independence

"There is nothing more meaningful to do on Yom Ha'Atzmaut - I felt a connection to the people and the land that you don't feel every day. all of Am Yisrael together." (Yakir, Shana Alef)

We celebrated on Yom Ha'atzmaut in the evening in the town of Ofakim. We joined a gar'in of religious families (a group that moved to the town together to create a strong communal life) as well as the local boys and girls high schools in the local stadium for dancing and continued through the streets to a festive meal hosted by the community. We can't wait for next year.



Yom Iyun, Givat Shmuel

We spent some time in Givat Shmuel hearing from two of our former talmudim Ohad Heisler and Matan Lau about the need to take communal responsibility. That was followed by a panel including Avraham Amrusi and Erez Kalfer discussing conflicts of emuna in their work environments. Alon Volken also spent time with our group and shared words of inspiration.

Atzmona in the "Merkaz"

We need the constant connection to Torah that we build in the mechina in order to spark a generation that will be full of ruach to bring vitality to the State of Israel. We are always innovating and creating new spaces to meet, renew our connection to learning and catch up with friends. Rav Netanel Tachover has been making the trip for the past year to learn with a chavura on Friday mornings in Givat Shmuel. These meetings complement the Shabbatot that we host for past students as well as other meetings to get chizuk.



Sigd

Have you had the chance to celebrate the Ethiopian Jewish holiday of "Sigd"? We joined in and heard a captivating lecture from Matoko Alamo who worked managing some of the mechina's finances until recently. He spoke about the special tradition and the longing for Yerushalayim as well as past and present challenges of Olei Ethiopia.



"We Run and They Run..."

Physical and mental preparation for military service took a step up as Tomer Gadot, a lieutenant major in reserves, joined the mechina. He is a trained and experienced fitness coach and creates personal, gradual plans for talmidim. We can see the results.





Pre-Draft Study Days

“Praiseworthy is the nation to whom it is so”

Everyone present felt the special atmosphere in the pre-draft study days. Hundreds of students from yeshivot and mechinot across Israel getting ready to draft with bravery and holiness arrived at the mechina to take in the yirat shamayim and sharpen up on some pertinent halachot before their enlistment. We were honored to host many important rabbis for shiurim and divre torah as well as the many shana bet students from other mechinot and yeshiva students who came to hear them. We owe a big thanks to Rav Yaki Weiss for arranging such a high-quality day.

Atzmona in the Field

Rav Eliyahu Ben-Artzi has begun his role as alumni coordinator. He aims to help continue their connection to the beit midrash in the ensuing years as they serve in the army, study in university and onwards. He has travelled to many bases visiting hundreds of our soldiers as they give from themselves with sweat and tears - but always wearing a smile! He receives them and coordinates their stays in our “soldiers’ home” as they come in droves on visits for weekends, chagim and various breaks.

He and the rosh mechina made the long trip to Shizafon (Armored Corps) to meet the dedicated commanders and speak to them about devoting themselves to their role. They then continued to Mitzpe Ramon to attend the ceremony of the end of officer’s training and express our pride at our many former students who embarked on their journeys in their new positions.



“Sixty Brothers...”

This is the seventh year in which the mechina includes a class of students from abroad who integrate in Hebrew classes over the course of the year, make aliyah and draft to meaningful service in the IDF. Rav Yaron Levy accompanies them with devotion during their time here and throughout their service (pictured is monthly learning in English in Yerushalyim for bogrim). Ya’akov, one of last year’s shana bet students, summed it up like this when asked about his experience:
“People ask me how I manage on my own in Israel with no family. I tell them - Come to Atzmona, I have sixty brothers and four father... I couldn’t thank them more.”





“Truth and Kindness Meet”

This past Shvat participants of the “Kanfei Ruach” (organization for children with disabilities) for a shabbat of socializing. Some of their members spoke at the oneg shabbat about their challenges and shared incredible stories of how they cope. They are true heroes; we did our best to host them for a great and happy stay that concluded with dancing. Later in the year we hosted their pre-Pesach camp led by endlessly-energetic Rav Aharon Tzohar. We are waiting for their return in anticipation.

Shabbat Across the Country

Shabbat with the mechina is a big part of the learning experience. Especially memorable are those spent visiting other places like yeshiva in Mitzpe Ramon. We traveled together, heard the rosh yeshiva, Rav Tzvi Kustiner. We heard a great lecture from a former talmid of ours, who has a successful career in the nearby air-force base, about his service and interesting situations regarding war ethics and Torah.

We also made our way to Bnei Brak to be hosted by and spend time with lovely charedi families. We toured a bit at night visiting the Ponevitzh Yeshiva and joining in on a great tish. We heard great speakers who touched on topics of charedi hashkafa and social issues. It was one of our favorite events and we daven that we will be successful in cultivating strong love for Am Yisrael.

With our lone soldiers

On the first week of the year, our overseas program went on a three day trip to northern Israel.

On the way we stopped by a Golani army base on the Gaza border. There we met with our alumni Al Tawil.

Al shared with us the reality of being in active duty and of being a lone soldier. His commanding officer is also a graduate of Otzem.



If you're looking to get a first hand Israeli experience,
to be part of life in Israel,

try

Atzmona - Otzem

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